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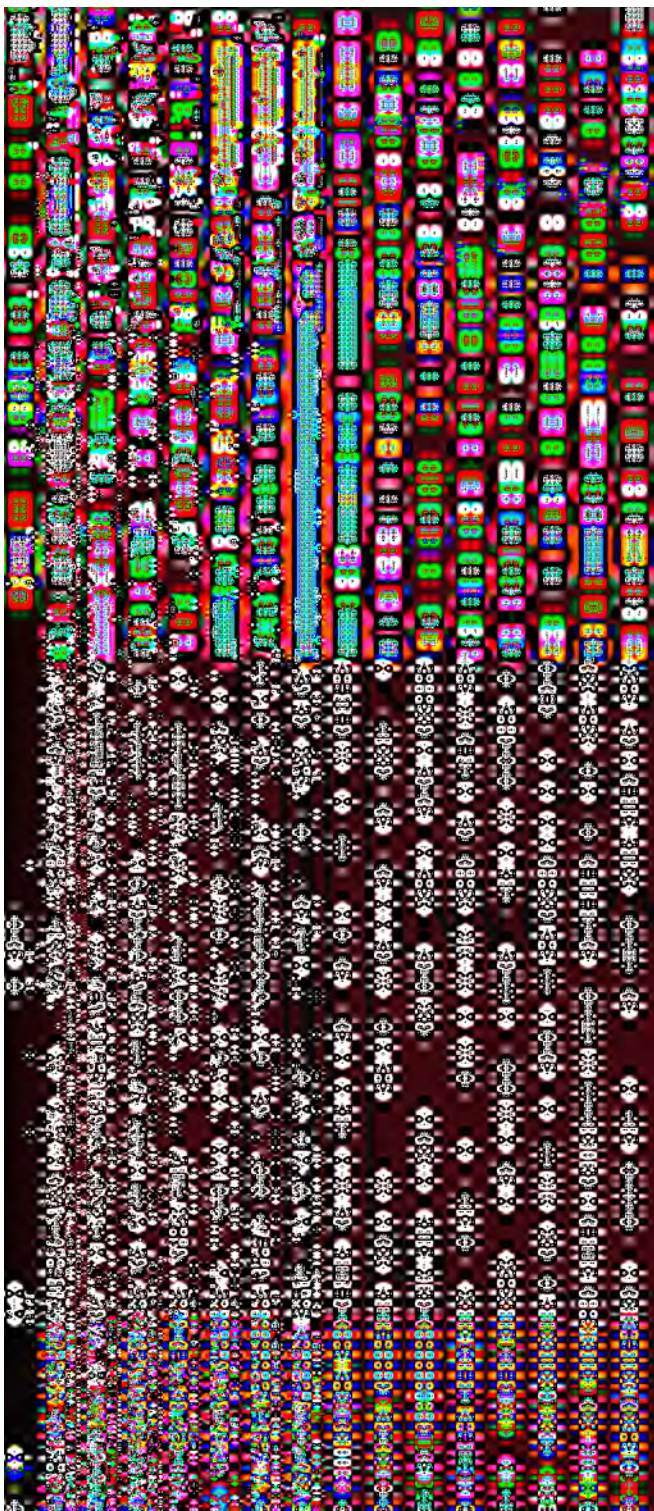
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**THE GRAHAMS OF INVERMOY.**

**VOL. I.**

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# THE GRAHAMS OF INVERMOY

BY

M. C. STIRLING

AUTHOR OF

“A TRUE MAN,”  
“THE PRINCESS OF SILVERLAND,”  
&c., &c.

AUBREY. What's in the book?

HUBERT.

Why, nothing new or strange;  
Honour and love do battle o'er a pledge,  
Calm lives flow on from childhood to the grave,  
And own the mighty bond of circumstance;  
A tale of every day.

*Love's Triumph.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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# THE GRAHAMS OF INVERMOY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

**T**HE village of Invermoy nestled near the upper end of a wide and lovely valley in the Scotch Highlands. Behind it rose an amphitheatre of hills that, whether they were robed in purple heather or veiled in spotless snow, were always beautiful. From among their mossy clefts trickled a brown burn which, joining with its fellows, grew to be a joyous little river, bounding and foaming over rock and

gravel, till it reached deeper channels, and flowed at last calmly past the village, and through Strathmoy to the distant Firth.

Long ago the beauty of the place had attracted certain wandering monks seeking shelter from the inroads of pirates.

Much enduring men these monks, as history shows them to us. Once two impassioned preachers had landed from misty Ireland on the wild west coast; gathering hearers, they built cells, opened a church, and saw an earnest little community spring up about them.

But Finneghail and Dubhghail, the fair-haired and dark-haired strangers from the sea, swept down in their long-beaked boats, and harried field and church. Then the few who were left girded their brown robes and turned their faces inland, march-

ing on and on till the finger of God should point to some fitting resting-place. And their faith smote the heart of a king so that it melted at their preaching, and he gave them land at Invermoy. There, with chanted Litany and uplifted cross, they stepped out the boundaries of a new home.

Time passed, and the plain Culdee cell gave place to more solid buildings; a monastery sprang up where the "recess" had stood, and a cathedral where the little church had echoed to the simple psalm. This, too, vanished, swept away by the eager hands of those to whom unadorned truth was more precious than wealth, or even life itself. Down went lofty roof and delicate spire; down, too, the exquisite leaf and blossom that some workman, as truth-

loving in his way as these destroyers in theirs, had carved to the glory of God.

And so at last there remained but a beautiful moss-grown ruin, of which one wall only was entire. Of this an economical generation made use, rearing against it an unsightly kirk that would have roused those ancient workmen to holy ire.

There the Reverend Andrew McAndrew held forth to a congregation who expected as yet no better food than he could furnish, and who argued with commendable earnestness over sermons that could neither be too long nor too abstruse for their taste.

In the stormy times of Scottish history many a skirmish had taken place in Invermoy. The tide of battle had swayed up and down the ferny banks, and under the ancient trees, and the corpse of many a gallant warrior

had lain grey and stark on those wide braes.

At different periods Highland caterans spoiled the farms, Lowland Covenanters raised the psalm or sung their Lament in low voices among the woods, Jacobites unfurled their luckless standard on the neighbouring moor, and lastly the Black Watch patrolled the country at the foot of the hills, and helped to establish order, to the great comfort of those who were weary of strife, and longed to cultivate their little patches of ground in peace.

By-and-by, when men had leisure to look back on those troublous times, and to estimate the qualities that distinguished them, the Moy became a classic stream to every Scot. Those who were just beginning to realise the blessings of tranquillity could feel keenly for their predecessors,

whose weapons hung in the place of honour on every cottage wall, and the chivalrous loyalty and dogged courage of their ancestors awoke in men's minds that fervid enthusiasm known only to mountaineers.

This enthusiasm found scope for practical expression in the wars that occupied the early years of the present century. Hundreds of Highlanders answered to the roll call during these campaigns, and page after page of simple soldierly record bears witness to their gallantry and endurance. Invermoy furnished its quota, and some of its inhabitants had good reason to watch with eager eyes for the arrival of the daily four-in-hand coach with news from the seat of war in Spain.

A certain wakefulness and growing energy began to be observable in the vil-

lage about the same time ; the loungers in Macrae's, the baker's shop and news-room of the place, talked more of the outside world and less local tattle—nay, the tattle itself began to have a more varied and pungent flavour. The cause of this improvement was not far to seek—no farther, indeed, than the county town of St. Magus, about twenty miles off, from which novel influences were beginning to radiate.

Providence had blessed the leading county gentlemen of the day with considerable sense, and, what was more uncommon in their shrewd nation, with wealth enough to carry out many schemes of improvement.

In consequence of this happy combination, St. Magus bid fair to outstrip every city except the capital, and Auld Reekie her-



self could not boast of such a building as that which was lately finished, and which was considered the crowning glory of the town. This was a huge, unshapely pile known as the Depot—a depot of a melancholy sort, for therein was room for no less than seven thousand prisoners of war, the victims of the French Emperor's thirst for glory.

Great was the excitement when the first batch of these miserable creatures landed at a little seaport, whence they were marched painfully to their gloomy prison. Invermoy was fixed upon for one of their halting-places, as there was an old gaol there which might serve as a safe shelter.

On the day when they were expected, a certain corner of the village High Street was haunted by idlers, who hoped to hear

from the guard of the mail-coach the hour at which the Frenchmen were likely to arrive. About noon the horn sounded, and a few minutes later the team of bays drew up at the door of the inn, next to the thatched cottage that did duty as post-office. The dignified guard paid no attention to questioners till he had handed in the tiny mail-bag, and refreshed himself with a mug of "twopenny;" then, with an air of condescension, he informed those nearest him that he had passed the French prisoners a few miles back, and that they would reach Invermoy about four that afternoon.

Sundry shoeless lads and lassies who were hanging about close at hand, scudded swiftly away in various directions the moment they heard this information. Scouts

these evidently, and so thought the guard, as he watched one of them hurrying down an avenue on his left.

"Gone to tell the Laird," said he, nodding in the direction the child had taken.

"Ay," replied a woman, in a dark stuff petticoat, loose jacket, and frilled cap. "We're a' fain to see the prisoners come."

"And a waefu' sight ye'll find it," replied he, "though there's no mony sights hereabout, I'll allow, for you to look at. Well, good morning to you, the nags are in."

With a careless laugh the guard swung himself into his place, and blew a cheery note as the coach started on its northern journey; but the woman who had spoken looked angrily after it, as it dashed up the narrow street.

"Set him up!" mutttered she, as she hobbled away, "set him up wi' his new fangled ways and his English! no mony sichtsindeed; it's no for Duncan Mackintosh to even himself to me that mind o' him a fushionless wean that got his paiks mony a day frae the schulach! But gude kens what the warld's coming tae. I'll awa' to Kate Macrae's, there'll be a wheen folk there come four o'clock, forbye the Laird."

The brown-legged, yellow-haired runner had sped far up the avenue on his errand ere Elspeth Morrison had gone many steps on hers. He was a comely, bright-faced little fellow, and never paused to draw breath, though his quick eye noted some "pignuts" and a few dropped ears of corn to be gathered up on his return.

The road along which he ran was not kept

12.        THE GRAHAMS OF INVERMOY.

according to modern ideas ; the reddish soil was heavily marked with cart tracks in the hollows, the verges were neither straight nor trimmed, and the fence that surrounded the park was of common hurdles. Yet the trees were fine, had been tastefully chosen and planted, and the view was one that compensated for any minor defects.

On the boy's right hand the ground sloped in undulations to the Moy, and the August sun shone on the bright waters and through the heavy foliage of the grouped beeches on its banks.

To the north, behind a knoll covered with red-stemmed Scotch firs, lay rich corn-fields melting into heathery moor, and this again into the soft blue haze of the distant mountains. A sharp turn of

the road between some Scotch elms brought the boy at last within sight of "the House," as it was usually called, being the only gentleman's residence so near the village. Here the avenue was somewhat smoother, and the gate that crossed it was of iron, while the hurdles were more neatly made.

Invermoy House itself was a square, substantial building, the centre of which was about ninety years old, while the wings were of later date, one having been built by the father of the present owner, and the other being lately completed. There was no attempt at decoration save that a clumsy wreath of foliage in stucco was festooned over the doorway, while three funereal-looking stone urns ornamented, or rather disfigured the top of the

older portion of the house. A narrow lawn in front was shaded by a wide-spreading horse-chestnut, under which sat a lady in a plain stuff dress, knitting a pair of hose.

She looked up with a smile as she heard the patter of bare feet on the road, and the boy hurried up to her, pulling his shaggy forelock, but speaking more familiarly than might have been expected.

"They'll be in the day, Duncan Mackintosh passed them oot by Brig o' Milne, and they suld be here at four o'clock."

"And ye ran up to tell me, Hughie. Ye're a gude bairn."

"I thocht ye'd like to ken. Ye'll be comin' to Kate's. There'll be an awfu' lot o' fowk there, I'm thinkin'."

"Ay, I'll come, maybe, or the Laird will. Go you in and get a piece, Hughie, and a

drink of milk, you'll be dry after such a run."

The boy nodded and ran off to the back entrance, as though such an errand were by no means unusual; nor was it, for neither man, woman, nor child ever took a message to "the Hoose," and came away empty-handed. The lady called after him, raising her voice somewhat more than was needful,

"The Laird's at the stable, Hughie, you might run and tell him."

The tone was sweet, but the accent was homely, and the English phraseology seemed to be contending with the native idiom in the speaker's mind. Hers was the Scotch of the peasantry, a dialect quite unlike the courtier tongue that sounded so pleasant when spoken with the refined man-



ner and voice of a lady. There was something, too, in the full figure, freckled complexion, and lintwhite locks, that suggested the appropriateness of the peasant costume. A dark petticoat, print "short-gown," and sun-bonnet would have set off the ample proportions better than that heavy gown, while the lace, which at the throat and sleeves relieved its sombre hue, would have been more suitable if worn with a rich silk.

Yet the face that bent over the lengthening hose was a good one, square-jawed, broad-browed, and quiet-eyed, a face full of repose. The calm eyes, it is true, were somewhat less calm than usual to-day, their lids were red and swollen, and the knitting-pins flew as though the worker were working against time, and fighting against her own thoughts withal.

Presently a tall figure approached her from the direction of the stables, which, with a small farm-steading, were built in a hollow, and cleverly concealed by shrubberies. The new-comer was a powerful man, fully fifty years of age, with a somewhat heavy yet good-natured and kindly countenance. He was dressed in rough homespun, and carried a shepherd's plaid across one shoulder, and a stout walking-stick in his hand.

"So the French loons are coming, wife. Will you come down and have a look at them?"

"No, Allan, I cannot, I cannot thole the sight of them."

"Why not? Tut, Jeannie, you mustn't sit still the whole day thinking of the lad-die. His chance is as good as another's."

• “Or as bad, ye mean! Oh! Allan, ye maunna bid me come and see those wretches. I’m no like one of you that can send your ain blude to the wars, and put a brave face upon it. I’m just fit to sit here and greet, thinking of my bonnie laddie that’ll maybe never wear the very hose I’m knitting to him.”

Here the poor mother broke into the loud sobs of an impulsive and untrained nature.

“Nonsense, Jean!” exclaimed the Laird, angrily, for his own voice was husky. “Be braver, my woman, and mind you, since Duncan has chosen to be a soldier, his honour’s dearer to us than even his life. I’ll go down to Kate’s about four, and maybe by then you’ll have got heart enough to come with me.”

Mrs. Graham shook her head and sobbed on, murmuring, "That's well enough for you;" but her husband did not hear, for he had turned into the house, knowing well by experience that her sorrow must be left to exhaust itself.

Unbounded had been the astonishment in the village of Invermoy, when Allan Graham of Invermoy married Jean McVittie, the daughter of his own grieve.

And yet the thing came about naturally enough. The Laird was apparently a confirmed bachelor; one or two of his relations hinted obscurely at a love story and a refusal in his youth, but they were never explicit, for the best of reasons,—that they were only uttering surmises.

These, as it happened, were not far off the

truth, but no mortal had ever wrung a confession from the reserved lips of Allan Graham. Whatever he had suffered, he sought sympathy from no one, but devoted himself to farming so energetically that his name speedily became known in his county.

No landlord ever had a better or more hard-working grieve, and master and man were on the friendliest terms. The Laird, who was considerate to his dependents, was always unwilling to disturb McVittie's scanty evening leisure, yet after-thoughts would sometimes occur to him when the day's business was over. Then, rather than summon the tired overseer to the house, he would take his stick and stroll to the farm for a last word. It was hard to keep a man standing at his own door,

so the Laird went in to the little parlour once or twice when those last words proved lengthy ones. On a certain autumn evening a storm detained him there so long that he was persuaded to share his hungry grieve's supper, which otherwise would not have been served. The meal was well cooked and nicely arranged by Jean's clever fingers—fingers that could sew, bake, and make butter and cheese better than any others in the parish. A “wise-like” lass she was too, steady and quiet, and not without scraps of book-learning gathered from her father of a winter's night.

The Laird found the pair pleasant companions, indeed his empty house looked so dull when he returned to it that very soon he found some excuse for

visiting the farm frequently in the evening. Not that he had the least suspicion that Jean was more to him than her position warranted; he never contemplated such a possibility, but merely said to himself that she was more sensible than his own cousin, Miss Mary Graham—almost the only woman that he was in the habit of meeting.

Jean had suitors, respecting one or two of whom McVittie consulted the Laird, regretting that his daughter was so decided in refusing them, but adding that on this subject he found her, he was sorry to say, “unco fashious.” He got small comfort from the Laird, who thought one of the aspirants in question not good enough for such a handy lassie; and as to the other, granting that he was an excellent match,

there were as good fish in the sea still, and why should McVittie be in a hurry to break up his own home?

"That's true enough, Invermoy," assented the grieve; "it's just that I've a hankering to see her in a hoose o' her ain before I'm dune wi' the warld."

"Tut, man," replied Graham, "you're hale and hearty, and you'll see my cousin Ian laird in his turn."

But McVittie did not live to salute another Graham by the familiar title of "Invermoy;" a sudden fever attacked him one wet autumn, and people hardly knew he was ill ere he was dead.

Graham hurried across with offers of assistance to the farm, and found sundry women from the village had already congregated there in that curious excitement

1



that always attends the familiar fact of a death. Some of them inquired, as it were, deprecatingly, whether Jean, "puir lass," would be allowed much time to pack up the "gear" that was plentiful in the dwelling, as, of course, it would be needed for a new grievin directly. They were somewhat startled at the reply.

"Tell Jean she can bide here as long as it suits her. D'ye think I'm going to turn her out sooner?"

The Laird's tone was unusually sharp, and he glanced at the speakers angrily as he left the house. There was a surprised pause among them, followed by sundry ejaculations, subdued in tone, but none the less expressive of wonder, not unmixed with jealousy, that a bit lass should be treated so handsomely. It was remem-

bered later, though no one seemed to have observed at the time, that the village oracle, shrewd Kate Macrae, stole upstairs with a smile on her lip, and immediately overwhelmed the weeping girl with offers of service and assistance.

The Laird's mind was by no means easy as he walked home. Having mentally abused the chattering fools who thought he would or could do a harsh thing by poor McVittie's daughter, he next began to think how much she would be missed when she left the farm. She was used to all the ways of the place, was so knowledgeable, too. Why, Mary Graham didn't know a maple from a sycamore, while Jeannie could tell every tree in the country-side. Ere the day of the funeral, the Laird had very nearly come to the conclusion that

Invermoy could not get on without Jean McVittie.

When the last rites were over, and he was seated once more in the parlour at the farm, Jean was sent down by her friends to see him, not without injunctions to "mak' Invermoy help her to some kind o' place."

Pale and tearful, she looked in her black dress a very different creature from the bright-faced girl who used to move so quickly about her work, and the change touched Graham's heart. When they had shaken hands, and he had uttered a few broken words of sympathy, Jean remained standing before him, twisting her handkerchief between her fingers.

"When'll I need to gang awa', Invermoy? They tell't me ye said I could bide

awhile, and I'm real grateful, but ye ken I maun gang, and I'd best do it at ance."

"Where are ye going, Jean?"

"To Glasgow. There's a cousin o' my mither's there."

"Ye won't like the town, Jean."

"I ken that, but a' places will be the same to me. It just braks my heart to think o' leavin', but it maun be dune."

"Don't go, Jeannie, stop here, will you?" said Graham, hurriedly. The girl looked up at him in her surprise,

"Hoo can I stop? There's nae wark for me noo?"

"Yes there is, Jeannie, more than you've ever had yet. I've been thinking of it all this week, and I can't let you go, my lassie. Stay and be mistress of the old place. I'm a deal older than you, but I'd

try to make you happy as my wife."

Pride, fear, incredulity, and, above all, a sudden bewildering sense that she had attained her heaven, surged through the girl's heart, and caught her breath. For an instant she tottered, blindly stretching out her hands for support, the next she found herself caught and held closely, gently, as she had never been held before. Once or twice a rough wooer had snatched a kiss at New Year or Hallowe'en, but never had she felt a touch like this, and even at that moment she recognized the difference. What could she do but yield herself up with a complete devotion to the man whom she dared not yet think of as her lover?

Lover indeed he proved himself, finding unexpected delight in her companionship

now the barrier between them was removed. Very firmly but very judiciously he took up at once the ground on which he meant to stand, smoothing Jeannie's difficulties for her, and teaching her, with quiet kindness, how to comport herself in her new sphere. Her tact aided him, and she speedily learnt to take her place so as to make her husband's home pleasant to him; and if in either heart there was a slight soreness because of the inevitable complications that sometimes arose, each bore the burden uncomplainingly, for the other's sake.

The wife suffered most, as is usually the case; in such affairs men are better armed, and at the same time less liable to attack from their fellows, but every woman knows the weak places in her sister's armour, and

has no scruple in piercing them. She knows the victim will utter no complaint, and she laughs to scorn the warrior's chivalrous code that forbade him to "strike below the knee."

The first blows were aimed at Jean a brief hour after her promise was given. The length of the interview between her and the Laird had roused the curiosity of her friends upstairs to a painful pitch, and shame-faced Jean knew not how to tell them what had occurred.

Graham took the task upon himself, and made the announcement boldly, with a smile on his lip, as he glanced at the astounded faces about him. He tried diplomatically to enlist one of the matrons on his side, asking her to be kind to the lassie, who was a bit overcome, but he was met by a diplomatic reply.

"It's yer ain folk that maun ha'e the guidin' o' her noo, Invermoy. Maybe Miss Mary will tak' tent till her."

"Well, I can't bring Miss Mary here in a twinkling, Mrs. Murdoch, so I must just leave Jean for the present to her old friend's kindness. She has neither father nor mother to turn to."

He had touched the right chord now, as he guessed by the assent of the comfortable-looking woman he addressed, so he went homewards, hoping that all would be well with his promised bride. And all was well, for that day, at least. It is true one or two hard and envious remarks were made, but the girl's mind was too confused for her to suffer from them; they stung more when she recalled them by the light of after-days. The moment Inver-



moy left, she took refuge in the capacious embrace of worthy Mrs. Murdoch, and in her throbbing, sorrow-tinged happiness, hardly understood the meaning of the talk that hummed round her.

“Miss Mary maybe will tak’ tent till her.”

The words rang uncomfortably in Graham’s ears as he wended his way towards the house, for he knew, as well as did the speaker of them, that Miss Mary’s tenderest feelings would be outraged by his late act. Nevertheless, she must be told the news, and told it by himself; so, feeling pretty sure that an hour would elapse ere the conclave at the Home Farm broke up, he wrote a note, wording it carefully, addressed it to Miss Graham, the Moy Cottage, Invermoy, and despatched it by a

groom who had not been near the farm.

The village street was a narrow one, but about its centre was a kind of recess, where two houses were built considerably further back than the rest. If it had not been for this space, accidents must inevitably have occurred, for two vehicles could not pass each other in the lower half of the street unless driven with more than carter's skill, and at the hours when the mail-coach was due, some care had to be taken to keep the road clear. The largest of the two houses in this recess belonged to Mrs. Kate Macrae, baker and news-monger of the village.

It was well that she had room in front of her dark green door, for there the *élite* of the place congregated daily. And no wonder the shop was popular; a clean

dignity to have called out the question she longed to ask, for she was "not one to trouble her neighbours," she averred, "though if news came her way she was aye ready to hear it." Still, having seen the man turn down to the Cottage, and allowed a short time to elapse for the delivery of a message, there was nothing unnatural in her standing at her door and "taking a look up and down streets" as he passed back. Being there, she could hardly have let anyone go by from the House without asking after that poor lassie, Jean McVittie. Tam Mackintosh knew very little about her—the Laird had been an unco while at the farm, and he thocht there maun be something agee with Miss Mary, for he had "ta'en a note till her, and she bid him gang, and syne she ca'd him back, and

syne bid him gang again," and in fact, quoth Tam, scratching his head and looking sorely puzzled, "the de'il was in me if I kent what she wanted."

"Ay, weel nae doubt we'll hear Tam, ye'd best gang yer ways and tell the Laird," said discreet Kate, and retired behind her counter again, chuckling to herself.

To her there entered presently a shrill-voiced dame, who had outwalked the rest in her anxiety to tell the news.

"Kate, woman, can ye guess what's happened? Sic a thing's no been heard tell o' in Invermoy!"

"Invermoy's gaun to marry Jean McVittie," said Kate, quietly.

"Wha tell't ye, Kate? There's nae-body down the road afore me, and I thocht

I'd ha'e the first word wi' ye mysel'!"

"Naebody tell't me, I jist fand it oot. Could ye no see it in his een, when he said that Jean suld bide in the auld hoose?"

"Presairve me, Kate, but ye're no canny! Fient a yane but yersel' wad ha'e fand that oot!" said the visitor, fanning her hot face with a crumpled handkerchief, and divided between admiration of her friend's cleverness, and disgust that her news was forestalled.

"Sit doon and ha'e a crack," said Kate, who never allowed her triumphs of wit to make foes for her. "Ye're the first that ha'e tell't it, though I had my ain thochts about it."

So these two drew in their chairs, and being soon joined by the main body from the farm, Invermoy and his bride were

then and there discussed with that completeness that belongs to such village parliaments. One exclamation was heard oftener than any other, and that was,

“My certie ! what’ll Miss Mary say ?”

## CHAPTER II.

MISS MARY.

WHO was Miss Mary, and what did she say? She was Allan Graham's first cousin, and, in everybody's opinion except his own, she ought to have been his wife.

Her father, like most younger sons of gentlemen, was a soldier, and, like many soldiers in those days, retired from the army with broken health, and a purse in which the small pension accorded for his wounds and service weighed but lightly. Blood is thicker than water, says the

Scotch proverb, and it was quite natural that he should settle near his wealthier kinsfolk, not only for company's sake, but because it was convenient to be within reach, so that game or vegetables, or an occasional cheese, might find their way from the House to the Cottage. To take a kindness from the hand of a kinsman was a mere matter of course to the proud old man, who would hardly have been indebted for a glass of water to a stranger.

His two children, Mary and Ian, grew up with their cousin Allan, who was some years their senior. They learnt with him at first in the village school, and later on were taught by the minister, while all three imbibed from their respective parents a full share of that romance that yet lingered among the Highlanders.



Perhaps the gossips of the neighbourhood—those great match-breakers—spoke too frankly to young Graham, and so made him shrink from doing the thing they chattered of; perhaps, also, their talk made Mary somewhat too conscious when her cousin was by. Certain it is that no word passed his lips that the vainest damsel could construe into love-making, and as no humbler swain dared aspire to her hand, she had the mortification of seeing her youth glide away into chill middle age without a chance being offered her of changing her estate.

It is a pitiful thing—this loveless life that falls to the lot of some women. She who can look back on her romance, though it has ended abruptly, even sadly, can bear her loneliness better since she

has once been loved; but she to whom no such brightness has come, is apt to be fretful and touchy, on the look-out for slights, for she feels deep down in her heart a sore consciousness that her whole life has been slighted. Both fancy, no doubt, that in marriage they would have found all that they miss, and do not know how

“Oft the weary wife wishes that she were a lass.”

Mary Graham had the poor consolation that her cousin was also unmarried, and at times she wondered whether it never occurred to him that it might be a good arrangement—she did not think of love now—if she were to be his wife and look after his house for him.

Even this speculation ceased at the time of her father's death, when her future had

to be provided for. Her brother Ian was in the army, and was engaged to be married as soon as he should obtain his promotion. Money was not more plentiful than it had been, and though Ian was generosity itself, he had his own prospects to consider.

Then Allan Graham came forward and offered to give his cousin the Cottage, rent free, for her life, putting it in thorough repair, and leaving her to keep it up. It was a handsome offer, and Ian advised her to close with it at once, pointing out that she could not have a better home than among the friends and neighbours who had seen her grow up, especially if he should have had luck in the war then visibly impending.

So Mary, after a moment's thought,

told her cousin she would gladly stay on in the familiar cottage, and when he shook her hand frankly and bid her remember that after her brother he was her nearest relation to whom she must look for help, she accepted that kindness also with a quiver of the lip and a sinking of the heart that told her how much hope had been lurking there. There was no love in Allan's open friendliness, and she realised that for her there never would be any.

Ian returned to his regiment, and then she settled silently down into the routine that seemed likely to last her life.

The Cottage was prim and neat, and she kept one small maid-servant, training her with scrupulous care, only to lose her when she deserved higher wages than Miss Mary could give.

Though her pedigree was the same as her cousin's, she carried her head far the higher of the two, for she had the sensitive pride of poverty. Sometimes she would lapse into gossip with the village folk, and was even known to look in at Kate Macrae's; but when sheer need of companionship drove her to such condescension, the gossips knew well that they must accept it as such.

The minister's wife, thanks to her position, was more on a par with her, but even Mrs. McAndrew treated her with that respect always readily paid by the Highlanders to good birth.

To do Miss Mary justice, she was a kind soul, helping the poor out of her own poverty, and full of fantastic notions of honour that were not without a beauty of

their own. She was sewing a "white seam," and thinking that she must go and see poor Jean McVittie, when her cousin's groom arrived with the note that had been so guardedly written.

No wonder that her equanimity forsook her, and that the lad was half frightened at her behaviour. There was no need to send any reply, for Graham, determined to settle everything out of hand, had announced his intention of visiting her that evening. So she sat and waited, this solitary woman, who thought she could have made a bright home for him who was coming to tell her the details of another's success.

She glanced round her tiny room, noting one by one the square table, with its dull red cloth, the ancient spinnet in the cor-

ner, the stiff, high-backed chairs, the rough shelves, on which lay a few worn volumes, and some curiosities which her father had brought from foreign parts, and she contrasted them with the solid furniture and plentiful comforts of Invermoy. She looked, too, at her own face in the narrow, brass-framed mirror over the mantelpiece, a face middle-aged, and not well-favoured, and she thought bitterly of Jean's fresh cheek and glossy hair. Well, she possessed something that, in her own eyes at least, was better than comeliness—an ancient name, and certain relics that showed how her kin had borne it—the battered swords that had been her grandfather's and father's, and which, with their dirks and medals, hung on her wall, and were dusted daily by her own hands.

Her heart swelled now as she touched the newer of the two grey blades, and thought of the chivalrous old man that had worn it, and what he would have said had he lived to see this day ! At that moment the door opened and Graham entered. She had imagined he would be shame-faced and awkward, but he came forward with extended hand, and only a shade of deeper gravity than usual on his face.

At sight of him her knees trembled, and her anger melted into sudden tears ; she dropped into her chair without a word, and her cousin laid his hands on her shoulders.

“ Come, Mary, don’t cry ; believe me my only regret in this matter is that I know I am going against your views. But I must have my way in this, and for kin-



ship's sake I ask you to take it in as friendly a manner as you can."

"Oh! Allan, Allan, could ye not have chosen among folk that were fitted to mate with a Graham? There's never been a name like yon in our family before!"

"I know that, Mary, but, you see," and a half smile showed itself, "none of the folk you mean ever made me think of them twice; now Jean comes of honest parents, and her ways have won me."

"Won you! Lord preserve us, Allan! do ye really love the girl? Are you not just wanting a woman to guide your house for you?"

"I wouldn't make any woman my wife for that cause, Mary. My dear, the thing's done, I can't talk of how it came about.

The question is, how will you treat her and me?"

"What do you want me to do? You're not expecting me to go and welcome Rob McVittie's daughter as if she had been a lady!" exclaimed Miss Mary, with a flash of returning temper.

"I want you to treat her as a kind woman should, and to help her to take her new place as easily as may be."

"Ay! I'm to tutor her, am I?"

"Will you help her, Mary? Yes or no? I don't want to part with old ties because I'm making a new one."

"Part! Oh, gude guide us! Bluid's thicker than water, but it's not so thick but what a bit lassie can make a man forget it in an hour!"

"I do not wish to forget it, Mary; if

there is any difference between us it will be of your making. You can help and teach Jean as no one else can, and I look to you to do it—will you?”

“Oh, ay, I’ll do my best, Allan; but, dear, dear, this is a pitiful day!” sighed Miss Mary, yielding, as women do, when a man lets them say their say without abating a jot of his demands.

Graham went home with a lighter heart, but his cousin, as she got out her frugal supper of bread and cheese, was hardly so contented. Did she not see how the women passing up the street glanced curiously at the Cottage? Did she not feel that in every room in the village there was wonder that night over Invermoy’s folly, and speculation as to her own condition? And she must go and see this girl

to-morrow, and learn to think of her ruling the old place !

How would she bear herself, and what in heaven's name was to be done about the wedding gown? "She can know nothing about what ought to be worn," reflected Miss Mary, "and I must see to it, though how she's to be married being in first mournings passes my comprehension."

The sharpest sting was over when the gown became the subject of meditation, and, indeed, what between curiosity, a sense of her own importance, and a certain excitement, the next few weeks passed by no means unhappily at the Cottage.

The first meeting proved less trying than either side anticipated. If Jean was nervous, she had the advantage of being

the hostess, not the visitor. The mere fact of offering a chair to a caller who comes on a doubtful errand makes his task more difficult, for he accepts with that courtesy the position of guest.

Jean's instinct taught her something of this, and without any needless fuss she took pains to place Miss Mary in a comfortable seat by the window, and to relieve her of her Indian shawl. If it was pride that induced Miss Mary to wear that cherished article, she had ample time for repentance as she toiled along the path by the river, and up the steep brae that fronted the Home Farm. Jean, as she watched her coming, the red shawl looking redder in the blazing sun, felt a compassion that greatly lessened her own trepidation.

"It's a warm day for walking," began

she, as she opened the window wider.

"It is indeed," assented poor Miss Mary, who knew that she was unbecomingly hot, and that nervousness was deepening the hue of her face.

She tried to console herself with the thought that Jean was no critic, and was, moreover, accustomed to such tints in her fellows, but none the less did she feel painfully self-conscious; in fact, she was altogether at a disadvantage. It was necessary to say something, for the girl was standing opposite to her with expectant eyes. She took the plunge abruptly.

"I must wish ye joy, Jean," said she, sitting stiffly upright in her chair, and with difficulty refraining from adding the accustomed surname, which would have entirely altered the tone of her sentence.

"Ay, Miss Mary," replied Jean, in a low voice, "I know it canna be pleasing to you, and I ask myself if I'm richt to tak' Invermoy at his word; but then it seems as though the Lord had flung a great happiness into my lap just when my heart was sorest, and it wad be a thankless thing in me to say I canna take it. It wad be like judgin' for myself against the Lord and against *him*."

Miss Mary was completely taken by surprise; she had never heard Jean express herself in this fashion before—indeed, the girl had been silent and shy with her, feeling her critical manner somewhat uncalled for. She perceived that she must take quite different ground from that which she had intended.

"No one could think ye should refuse,

Jean ; it would be a strange thing if you were to say nay to Invermoy."

"D'ye think I couldna ha'e done it, Miss Mary," replied the girl, proudly, "had I thocht it was the right thing for him? But I hadna time to think, and I've gi'en him my word now."

"You're a good lassie, Jean," said Miss Mary, holding out her hand, "and ye should be a happy woman."

"Ay, should I; but, oh! Miss Mary," cried Jean, flinging herself on her knees beside her guest at the first sign of kindness, "how will I make him a happy man? He says I can do 't, but I misdoubt it sorely. Will you not help me, you that are the ae leddy I can ask, and I wadna say onything to the folk I ken, aboot Invermoy's affairs."



Here was a sentiment that went straight to the proud heart of the lonely woman, who was looking so earnestly at the anxious, upturned face before her.

“Jean, are ye sure óf that? Will ye not be hankering after Kate Macrae, and all the clack of the village?”

“Miss Mary,” replied Jean, solemnly, “I ken fine I’ll be lonesome whiles, for I couldna fash Invermoy wi’ a’ my troubles, but I maun say like Ruth, in the Bible, ‘Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.’”

“My dear,”—Miss Mary’s eyes filled, and she leant forward almost involuntarily and kissed the broad forehead—“I’ll help you in every way I can. I can tell you some of the things that will be expected of you, and you must ask me any-

thing you want to know. And, Jean, you mustn't call me *Miss Mary* any longer. We are to be cousins, you know."

It was Jean's turn to look awkward now. The idea of calling this proud lady by her Christian name disturbed her.

"Don't be afraid of me, Jean," continued the other, waxing more friendly as she saw that all the advances were to come from her. "I'm sure we'll be good friends, and," she added, with a little effort, "Allan hoped we might be."

"I'll do my best, and I'll think it real kind if you'll tell me about my mistakes, Miss—I mean when I mak' mistakes," stammered Jean.

It was a rash admission, for from that moment till the wedding day Miss Mary left her no peace. She considered herself

in a measure responsible for every blunder in grammar, or broad Scottish phrase, that passed her pupil's lips, and though her tuition had a marked effect, poor Jean's spirit was sore within her as she reflected on her inability to attain the standard required of Invermoy's wife.

Miss Mary's mind was much exercised about the wedding. It was agreed that, under the circumstances, mourning must be laid aside, at least for one day, but the great question was, where could the ceremony take place ?

Scotch marriages are not celebrated in the kirk ; it was altogether impossible that the bride should be married in her future home ; the farm was clearly unsuitable, and the Cottage was too small. Besides, the point that agitated her most, and, sooth

to say, disturbed Invermoy himself, was the bearing that should be maintained towards the people of the village, Jean's old acquaintances.

To exclude them altogether was to sow the seeds of ill-will, to invite them would be to banish all other guests. At last Invermoy solved the difficulty by suggesting that they should travel to Edinburgh, Miss Mary taking charge of the bride, and he paying the expenses of the party. This was a satisfactory solution, for though it involved what was then a toilsome journey, it gave Jean an opportunity of seeing fresh people, and removed the whole affair beyond the reach of local tattlers.

That visit to the capital made a bar of brightness, a sort of fairy epoch between the old life and the new for Jean. It was

a stepping-stone by means of which she learned to mount more easily to her new level.

She had never seen a larger gathering than at a feeing fair or cattle market, and she knows not on what strange object to gaze first, when she finds herself holding fast to Miss Mary's arm in the bewildering crowd of Leith Walk. To be honest, Miss Mary is not quite at her ease, and her cheeks are somewhat flushed behind her long black veil. Noisy sailors stride past her on the narrow footway, cripples and beggars of every description, easily recognising the country visitor, ask importunately for alms, carts creak loudly by, laden with produce for or from the vessels anchored in the glittering Firth, and last, but not least, shops and open-air stalls

distract her attention and tempt her with their cunningly displayed wares. Queer, rickety tenements these shops are, here freshened with hasty whitewash, there black with age and weather, but all of them bearing prodigious signboards, and each claiming to be the one good warehouse of its kind.

Those streets stalls, too, jutting with bold angles into the path, how cleverly they tempt the passers by! No wonder that lean Dominie in the rusty brown wig lingers lovingly over those rough boards on which old books and new broads-heets are displayed—no wonder Miss Mary looks longingly into that open room where foreign beads, quaint stuffs and china cups lie in disorder. There are dark visaged men with gold ear-rings in their ears

lounging at the door and talking a foreign tongue, and the sight of them would have prevented the timid lady from entering, even had she had money to spend. She is to make some purchases for the bride, and an afternoon slips away in canvassing the respective merits of blue taffeta and cloth pelisses, beaver bonnets and delicate ruffles.

Jean is growing weary with excitement, and longs to get back to their lodgings and drink a dish of tea; but just as Miss Mary closes her purse, a gaunt figure, clad in faded tartan, passes down the street, and the strains of Claverhouse's Lament ring out from a war-pipe.

"Eh, me!" ejaculates Miss Mary, clasping her hands, "there's the *piobaireachd* of our clan, and that's the tartan of the —th."

Forgetting alike her shyness and her dignity, she hurries out to speak to the wandering piper, and he salutes her when she tremblingly says that she is Mr. Graham's sister, though he was discharged when her brother Ian was but a lad. She does not wear the new buckled shoes she had promised herself at the wedding, but she recalls the beloved *pio-baireachd*, and thinks their price is better bestowed in warming the heart of the old soldier.

To Jean this little incident is strange; she is a Lowlander, and cannot quite understand, though she has often seen, the passion of the Highlanders for their national music; yet out of the newly-discovered capabilities of her nature, she comes near sympathising with the sudden



flush and quiver that disturb her friend's usual calm.

Invermoy has a few friends in Edinburgh who, for old acquaintance sake, are willing to take notice of his bride, even while they lift their hands in private and wonder over their tea if Allan Graham is demented that he should choose such a one.

Still, with some of them, Jean makes her way, and, keenly observant as she is, she picks up a wonderful deal from these stately ladies who move so uprightly and wear their faded silks with such a quaint grace.

When she returns home to Invermoy, the eager speculations of the village are soon set at rest. Kate Macrae expresses

the general feeling when she remarks,

“Jean McVittie was aye gleg at the uptak, and noo she’s Mistress Graham she kens fine hoo to haud hersel’. She’s owre grand for the likes o’ us, and it’s vera richt. I’m no ane that wad wuss Invermoy’s wife to demean hersel’ for me.”

The oracle having spoken thus, her followers accepted the dictum, and none of them trespassed on their former acquaintance or considered her kindnesses were more than the natural friendly deeds of “the leddy.”

The solitariness of Jean’s previous life made this separation all the easier, and though she often wished for some female companion, she speedily recognised the

fact that the unrestrained, somewhat rough kindliness of such as Mrs. Murdoch would satisfy her even less now than it had done formerly.

Miss Graham visited her frequently, and acknowledged to her brother, the Captain, that she was a capable woman, and would have been a great addition if she had only been of good family.

When, however, a boy was born about a year after the marriage, a slight soreness began to lurk in Miss Mary's heart, for Captain Ian and his son, a child of nearly three years old, had hitherto been heirs to the estate of Invermoy. Miss Mary immediately became possessed with the idea that she must now save something for her poor nephew's benefit. This seemed at first sight an impossibility, but such a deter-

mination once taken, its execution must needs follow, and one step renders the next easier.

Even her little maid-of-all-work did not know to what extent her mistress saved and pinched for her boy's sake. The tea-cakes that used to be piled in a pleasant heap upon her table were voted unwholesome now, and when jam was taken out for a stray guest, the heavy glass dish was emptied back into the jar in the evening, its contents being pronounced only fit for a bairn's sweet tooth.

These economies did not press very hardly, for the stomach is a good servant, and submits readily to training ; but it did cost Miss Mary some self-denial ere she learnt to save the logs when the fire was

getting low, and the bitter wind was blowing off the snow-fields. She did it, however, drawing her chair closer, and cowering in a shawl over the embers, while her knitting-pins moved stiffly in her purple fingers.

She was too reserved to whisper a word of her scheme to anyone, much less to place her little hoard in a bank, or try to increase it by obtaining interest for it ; it was locked away in a small but ponderous trunk, studded with a profusion of brass-headed nails, and kept for greater security under her bed.

Sometimes at night, with locked door and strangely eager face, Miss Mary would drag it forth, and add a piece or two to the store, or count yet again the sum she already knew by heart. As though to

reward her patient perseverance, an event occurred when her nephew Allan was about ten years old that made his aunt's task an easier one.

## CHAPTER III.

JAMES DEWAR.

FAR up among the glens lay the "clachan" of Balmawhustle, a group of cottages that had once been connected by a low rough wall, so that sheep or cattle could be gathered together at night in their midst. Some said that such had been the practice in the days when no farm was ever safe from the Highland robbers who were called "caterans," or "broken men;" some alleged that it was merely for warmth and nearness to their respective owners that the few *beasties* belonging to the cla-

chan were brought there during the prolonged snowstorms to which the inhabitants were accustomed. Probably the truth lay between the two ; but whatever may have been its purpose, the remains of the wall, now feathered with grass and fern, gave a certain beauty to the place. The cottages were small and wretched ; every here and there a broken pane was stopped with a wisp of straw or crumpled rag, the thatch was untrimmed, and sometimes so overgrown with moss and pale houseleek that it seemed as though the deep roof must crush in the walls.

Sanitation was unknown in Balmawhustle, but the clear breezes swept round the dwellings, and the people lived too much outside their houses to suffer from the condition in which they were kept.



The clachan was many miles from the nearest kirk, and many more from a market, and except to attend one or other, none of the folk went far from home. The neighbouring farms supplied most of the produce they required, and their own toiled out the rest, while pedlars at intervals brought to their doors the goods that supplemented the homespuns they wore.

One cottage stood a little apart from the rest, and was kept in better order, its size and comparative cleanliness indicating that its owners were above actual poverty, as the word was understood in Balmahustle.

One corner of the dwelling was occupied by the usual box-bed; opposite to the fireplace a small deal table was placed against the wall; the girdle, and a big black pot,

almost eclipsed the tiny peat fire, and a couple of low wooden chairs were piled on each other in the furthest corner, where a half-open door showed a tiny room beyond, the floor of which was covered with webs of tartan and bundles of yarn. Space was scanty, for in front of the window, and blocking up a large part of the room, was the loom that brought a gleam of prosperity to the cottage. There was a savoury odour rising from the pot; the hens that pecked familiarly about the floor looked better fed than most of their feathered neighbours; the bit of garden was well tended, and the bunches of herbs, and a mutton ham that hung high up among the time-blackened rafters, showed that from hand to mouth was not necessarily the rule here.

Robert Dewar was a wise man as well as a good weaver. His broad brow, from which the long white hair had been worn away, his steady blue eyes, and firm mouth bespoke a resolute and observant character.

He was strongly imbued with the ambition that prompts many a Scottish peasant to years of effort, the ambition that his only son should enter the ministry. For himself education had been a thing impossible, yet he had picked up strange scraps of practical information that formed the weft, so to speak, of his web of thought, while eerie tales and superstitions composed its woof.

When the day's work was over, Robert would don his broad blue bonnet and grey plaid, and saunter out to the three great trees that crowned a grassy knoll near the

clachan. There two dark sycamores threw out the lighter foliage of the lime in strong relief, and their mingled shade fell on sweet-smelling wild thyme and starry eye-bright. Below this knoll ran a brattling stream, spanned by an ancient bridge of such fairy proportions that it scarcely seemed to be built of solid stone. The pointed arch sprang lightly from tiny buttresses, buried in birchen bush and ivy, and the old weaver loved to gaze at it night after night, though he could not have told why it so delighted his eyes.

Far into the gloaming he would sit, telling what he knew of books and outer world to his son, and the boy, as he lay propping his face on his hands, looked up always to the ridge of hill that rose between him and the western sky, and longed

to be on the other side, "down among the world of men."

In winter, when the wind whistled through bare branches, and the cottagers were forced to crowd round the blazing peat or guttering candle, James Dewar spent hours in supplementing the learning that he walked many a weary mile in summer to gain. At last the time came when, with a bundle at his back, a few guineas sewed into his coat, and a grave but hearty blessing from his father, he set out for distant Edinburgh, there to enter at the college with a view to the ministry.

It was a sharp trial to a lad's mettle to be thus torn from his old world life and thrust into the new existence of a town. There was no penny post in those days to

make communication easy, and it behoved him to stand firmly on his feet and bear his troubles unaided.

James's career was like that of a hundred others; he struggled and starved, buying only food enough—and that of the meagrest kind—to keep body and soul together; he toiled early and late, reading while he munched his coarse morning bannock or plate of porridge—reading still, far into the night, when he could get a comrade to share with him the cost of a solitary candle.

No one paid any heed to these struggling students save the professors who taught them, unless it were that some few were fortunate enough to lodge with motherly souls who cared for them. The self-denial that makes men was largely

practised in the dim closes of the Old Town, and was not even thought remarkable, for fastidious luxury had not yet become the fashion.

While James Dewar read, he began to suspect that his tastes were hardly of the clerical order. More than once he devoted the whole night to study in order that he might spend some hours of the day in visiting certain mills near the town, and when in his second session he encountered a fellow-student in the decent attire and drawing the modest pay of a clerk, his mind was made up once for all.

It was a sad blow for old Robert Dewar when his son's letter reached him, stating his determination, and it startled him to observe that James had apparently decided on his course, even

while he nominally asked his father's advice.

Work was over for Robert that morning; the rich threads of the tartan he was weaving were left untouched, and rejecting his wife's offer of consolation he went out, not to the trees, in sight of the entire clachan, but down to the water's edge beside St. Coilean's Brig. There he re-read the letter and took counsel with himself and with the familiar stream, and at the end of an hour he rose up and clapped the epistle into his wide pocket, with the sigh of a man who has settled a knotty point to his satisfaction.

"The laddie maun gang his ain gait, wife," he remarked, as he laid aside his bonnet and resumed his work; "it's no for unwillin' hands to guide the pleugh in the Lord's field, and ye ken gin ye pit yer



han' till't, ye maunna turn back. Jamie's no to say yokit yet, and he's owre thrawn to dae ony gude in the kirk. Forbye, there's nae doot the laddie's richt; meal's unco dear, and a bit siller wadna be amiss. Maybe, he'll ha'e a hantle yet, 'ettle at a gown o' gowd, ye'll aye get a sleeve o't.'"

Thus James Dewar quitted college and began a different career. A professor who knew him for a steady lad got him a place in a law-stationer's shop, and there he made such a good use of his time that he was soon fit for the better position he coveted.

Having agreed to the change in his son's destination, Robert Dewar was anxious to help him if he could. It happened that he had a web in hand for Mr.

McHaffie, the "writer" or attorney of Invermoy.

He took unusual care in finishing it, and instead of sending it by a farmer bound for the village, he donned his Sunday suit and set forth with it himself. When he returned next day to Balmawhustle, it was with a certain twinkle in his eyes that showed his journey had not been in vain. Entering his cottage, he handed his blue bonnet and plaid to his wife, and stood wiping his hot brow in provoking silence while she hung them on their accustomed pegs.

"Gi'e me my auld claes, Janet, there's an hoor's licht yet, and I can set the morn's wark."

"Weel, Rab, can ye no tell a body gin ye've dune aught for the callant or no?"

“Ou ay, but ye can gi’e me the claes.”

“Deed, then, I’ll no, till ye’ve tell’t me. I ken fine it’s a’ richt by the cantie glint o’ yer een.”

“Weel, wife, oor laddie—gin he can gi’e satisfaction—wull be prenticed to McHaffie and Spait for three years, and wha kens but we’ll see him a writer himsel’ !”

“McHaffie and Spait ! My certie ! Eh ! Rab, man, oor Jamie a writer ! I’m a prood woman this day, but, eh, what’ll Peggy Macphie say—she’s aye jealous o’ Jamie.”

“The deil tak Peggy Macphie,” retorted Rab, “there’s nae godliness in yon hoose, and she’ll no can daur even yon lang callant o’ hers to oor Jamie.”

Robert was much elated when he allowed such an expression of family pride to

escape him, and Janet, on the strength of it, thought she might slip out at once to communicate her news in the clachan, without incurring the usual good-humoured rebuke on "gadding wives."

Now James Dewar was well known by name to no less a person than Miss Mary, by reason of his mother having been a servant in her father's house and a Graham to boot. This last fact would have made her master's family take an interest in her, even had she been a less worthy creature than she was. Not a web of tartan or homespun was used in the Cottage save what was woven by Robert Dewar after he married, and the excellence of his work, no less than the merits of his wife, soon obtained for him the custom from Invermoy House as well.

Therefore, when James Dewar found himself at Invermoy, it was almost his first duty to pay his respects to Miss Mary. He secured a small but tolerably clean room in one of the low, steep-roofed houses in the Moyle, a narrow road often half submerged by the river in the winter floods, and on the evening after his arrival he presented himself at the Cottage. Miss Mary welcomed him with more than her usual cordiality, for was he not half a Graham—she even inquired where he had arranged to live, thinking to advise him on the subject if he were still undecided. She had not much to say against the locality he had chosen, though she did suggest that it was very wet down there at times.

“ Ay, Miss Graham, but it’s the cheaper,

so I'll no quarrel wi' it," replied the lad, laughing, and the bright face and cheery voice made quite a pleasant glow in the dull room.

"Noo that's what I call a real leddy," said James to himself as he trudged homewards, "she minds a' the things ye think she might well have forgotten, and speirs at ye about them as though she'd nae ither thing to think o'."

This favourable impression did not wear out as time went on, for whenever Miss Mary passed young Dewar going to kirk, or, as sometimes happened, on his way to the post, she had a kindly word for him: Moreover, there were orders for his father from the House now and again, which were generally conveyed through her, and entailed consultations as to Robert's en-

gagements, and the chances of getting the webs conveyed by some friendly hand carriage free. On one of these occasions, after the business was concluded, Miss Mary detained the lad for a few minutes' chat.

"How do you get on yourself, James?" she inquired. "I hear McHaffie's clerks get ten pounds a year to begin with, but that is a small wage for a young man like you, unless you think you will do well when your apprenticeship is over, and become a partner in time."

James coloured and shifted his position with such unexpected hesitation that Miss Mary looked at him, alarmed lest some confession of folly should be impending—a promise, for example, to some penniless lass.

“Ye see, Miss Mary,” said James, who had by this time adopted the name in use in the village, “there’ll nae doubt be a rise for me some day, though it’s ‘lang o’ comin’,’ and it’ll be as ‘welcome’ as the Prince when it dis come. But I’m no just dependin’ on that; I’m making a wee pickle for mysel’, and I’d ha’e mair if I had mair. Gowd got is gowd growin’, they say, but if ye ha’ena the seed ye canna look for corn.”

“James Dewar,” ejaculated Miss Mary, to whom this speech had a mysterious and unholy sound, “what are ye after that ye want money to make money? It’s not the awful sin of card-playing and gambling that’s tempting your mother’s son?”

“Lord’s sake, Miss Mary!” exclaimed James, startled in his turn, “ye maun



think unco jill o' me if ye think I'm such a born fool as to touch the deil's bukes, saving your presence, Miss Mary, for speakin' o' him."

"Well, I'm thankful to hear it, James. Ye've been at the college, and who knows what evil ways ye may have seen there? But tell me what it is you are about."

James then explained that, when in Edinburgh, he had discovered, far out among the grassy Pentlands, a little colony of weavers, Highlanders most of them, who had left their native glens under the pressure consequent on a wet summer and a hard winter, and, unversed in the ways of a town, had sold themselves, as it were, to a hard task-master, who paid their work at the lowest possible figure. Chance had enabled James to dispose of a web or

two for them at better prices, and it occurred to him that, if he had but the capital, he might employ them himself on better terms than they obtained at present. His own father's loom was never idle, so it was not needful to seek for orders, or fear competition on his account. A few words to a wealthier fellow-student, who needed a plaid, gave him the opportunity of making a beginning, and he had already turned over a few shillings, paying his friends in ready money for their work, and disposing of it a little under the usual shop price. He added that he had not told anyone of this, as it might be considered an indiscretion ; but had he only the money to pay for larger orders, he thought he saw his way to a speedier competency than McHaffie and Spait could offer him.

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had, she never burnt a candle. Dark shadows clung around the old black chest of drawers, and lay beyond the four-poster, with its hangings of sad-coloured moreen, and its wonderful patchwork quilt. A rough deal table occupied the centre of the room, a smaller one, with a basin and ewer, stood against the wall, and the half-open door of a cupboard revealed a few garments hanging limply within it.

The contents of the trunk had an old-world air, like everything else in the room ; folded up at one side was a silk dress that had been worn by another Mary Graham at Holyrood in the '45, the rich tints of which gleamed strangely in the moonlight ; a few letters, written on harsh ribbed paper, a regimental plaid, two or three ornaments of no value, a piece of lace, and

two cases occupied the rest of the box. One of the latter was of black leather, much frayed, and contained a set of amethysts, Miss Mary's only jewellery; the other was a wooden box, curiously carved, and evidently brought from abroad. In this was the hoard that she was contemplating so earnestly. To let her savings go out of so safe a receptacle seemed a tempting of Providence, and yet they were so small when compared with the needs they were to supply! James Dewar was an honest lad, too, come of decent folk, surely if there were faith in any man, he might be trusted. Young Allan was growing quickly, and his father might at any moment be sent abroad, there were so many rumours of war, and if he died where would his boy be? Whereas, if she could hold out her

hand and say, here, I, your old aunt, have done something for my boy!—

At this, the constant culminating point in her dreams, Miss Mary would feel a lump rising in her throat, which warned her to shut up the trunk, and push it under the bed, for she by no means approved of what she called “sentiment.” She had well nigh determined to invest some at least of her money, ere she laid herself down in the shadowy depths of the great bed, and a very few days elapsed before the handmaid, Phemie, was despatched with this message—

“Tell Jamie Dewar to step over this evening and speak a word with me on a matter of business.”

The lad was not a little embarrassed when Miss Mary asked him to sit down,

and placed herself opposite with an air that involuntarily reminded him of a school-teacher addressing a culprit. Presently it seemed as though the lady were the culprit and he the authority, so anxious did she look. In a voice duly lowered, lest Phemie should be listening, she began to question him further respecting the weavers he employed, going into details in a manner that not only surprised, but annoyed him. His native courtesy fortunately prevented him from expressing his feelings, and after a few minutes she explained her reasons.

“I suppose you’ll need a large sum, James, to improve your business to your mind?”

“The larger the better, but I’m no above sma’ things. Ae step at ance gets

ye up the brae, but he that winna gang maun bide in the mire."

"And suppose any person interested in you, and who wished to employ a small sum well, were to lend it you, what would you do?"

"Oh," said James, who began to see light, "I'd mak' the best o't I could, and gi'e them maybe a third o' the profits" (this tentatively).

"A third would hardly be worth having, I think, if it were but a small sum, and it is a risk, of course—a great risk to lend money."

"Nae doubt, Miss Mary, nae doubt. Weel, maybe half the profits wad suffice; I couldna gi'e mair nor that."

"No, I suppose not," replied she, with as calm an air as though she were used to



business, and her heart were not beating loudly under her sober morning gown. "And would ten pounds be any good—just to start with, you know?"

"Ou ay, it wad be a gran' lift for me," said James, who, in truth, was in want of cash at that very moment for a bargain, and to whom such a sum was worth twice its present value.

"Then, James, I'll give it you," said she, opening a box with nervous fingers, "you'll no say that I have any hand in your work. You're half a Graham, and your mother was a trusty woman. I hope her son is like her."

"Miss Mary, the Grahams are aye leal, ye needna fear me," replied James, proudly, as he took the money; "I'll render ye an account o' every penny o' this gowd, an'

I'm prood to think that it's you that gi'e me the first help I've had frae ony but my faither."

Miss Mary recognised the Highland tact which ignored everything but the favour she was conferring, and she held out her hand. James grasped it with a bow and a quiet "gude nicht," and returned to the misty Moyle more elated than he would have cared to confess. His keen wit had enabled him to perceive at once that Miss Mary was more anxious to turn an honest penny for herself than to help him, though no doubt she was glad to combine both ends. Though a little surprised, he thought her anxiety not an unnatural one.

A few evenings ago he had said to himself, with no small conceit, that the

folk would be a bit astonished did they know that the poor weaver's son had schemes in his head that he trusted to no one but the lady they all looked up to; now he felt that the confidence was mutual, and it appeared to him that he had risen another step on the ladder he meant to mount in time.

Deep into his heart had sunk some of the poetry of the hills, some of the romance of his father's tales, and an unconfessed longing lay there also for a better life than that to which he was born. The rough phrases and uncouth ways of his associates jarred on him curiously at times, and no girl of his own class had exercised so strong an influence on him as did this kindly, quiet lady. True, he was a lad of three and twenty, and she a score of years

his senior; she was neither handsome nor richly clad, yet her womanly gentleness impressed him more than youth and good looks of a ruder sort could do, and the refined voice and accent made familiar Scottish idioms assume new meanings when she uttered them, though to a southerner their sound would have been barbarous in the extreme.

From the night when he carried away that precious ten pounds everything seemed to prosper with Dewar. The very walls have ears, and eyes too, in such places as Invermoy, and ere long it began to be whispered that Jamie Dewar had gotten twa or three packages by the mail-coach.

Duncan Mackintosh winked sagaciously when some one inquired, "what Rab De-

war's laddie wanted wi' lang packets like yon?" and replied that "there's mair sense aneath Jim Dewar's cap than in a' the heids in Invermoy."

Such an assertion naturally incensed the questioner, but Duncan vouchsafed no explanation, and departed, whistling,

"It wasna the bannet, 'twas the heid that was in it,  
Garr'd a' the warld talk o' Rab Roryson's bannet."

The climax, however, for the village curiosity was when, by the down mail, arrived no less a person than Tod o' the Candleriggs.

A great man was Tod, he wore English broadcloth, was noted for his profound knowledge of current politics, and was, besides, the owner of the largest draper's shop in the town of St. Magus.

Tod lighted down leisurely at the post-

office, and after a word with the guard, who was seen to indicate some locality, went straight to the office of McHaffie and Spait. This made it clear that his errand was on legal matters, so Kate Macrae and her gossips were surprised to see him emerge hastily in a few minutes, and turn his steps towards the Moyle. Rather before his usual dinner-hour James Dewar also ran out, and hurried to his lodgings, where Tod was sulkily awaiting him.

James was not a little perturbed at his visitor's inopportune arrival, and was mentally cursing the officious Duncan for sending him to the office. Mr. Spait had informed Tod emphatically that he, James Dewar, was not a partner yet, whatever he might intend to be, and that, therefore, that office was not for the transacting of

his business, but that of Messrs. McHaffie and Spait, writers.

Tod, accustomed to be made welcome wherever he chose to bestow himself and his news, felt his dignity ruffled by this peremptory address, and retorted that he did not come all the way from St. Magus to be turned out of anybody's office, and that Dewar should repent the day he had brought him there.

When James reached his lodgings, however, his obvious discomfiture and profound apologies moderated the great man's indignation, and it evaporated altogether under the influence of a glass or two of true Highland whisky, that had never paid a ha'porth of duty. The absent Duncan served as a scapegoat to carry all the blame, and the business the two had in

hand was so satisfactorily concluded that James returned to his desk in far better spirits than when he quitted it.

When the day's work was almost over, Mr. McHaffie, seizing a moment when his partner was absent, peered over his spectacles at his apprentice.

"What's this about you and Tod, Dewar?"

James explained, half defiantly.

"Well, but you know it is against all rule and precedent that an apprenticed clerk should be entering into any business on his own account."

The tone was by no means severe, and James ventured on a half jest.

"It's all after hours, sir, so it surely indicates a love of business."

McHaffie chuckled.



“And that should secure our approbation, you think? Well, well, I don’t say it doesn’t as long as the two branches don’t interfere ; but partners in a firm are like husband and wife, Dewar ; there’s whiles a diversity of opinion, and he’s a wise man who can keep a calm sough, as the saying is.”

“I understand, sir, and ye shall have nae reason to complain,” replied James, who felt that he had come well out of a scrape.

But he had not heard the end of Tod’s visit yet. To reach the Moyle from the office he must needs pass Kate Macrae’s, and that worthy woman was on the watch for him. It was no use his taking the opposite side of the narrow street ; Kate’s

voice would have reached across a far wider interval.

"Gude e'en to ye, Jamie Dewar. Ye're in an unco hurry."

"Ye may say that, Kate; I've a wheen things on hand the nicht," said he, endeavouring to pass on.

"Ou ay, 'there's a het hurry when there's a hen to roast,' but the hen's a chuckie yet that's to roast for *you*, sae ye can e'en bide a wee. Come ben an' ha'e yer bannock an' a bit crack."

From the moment that Tod set foot in the village, James knew that his secret would have to be confessed, therefore it might as well be told once for all, so as to be retailed, with the sanction of Kate's authority. Into the shop he accordingly

went, and stated his case so as to earn its owner's unqualified approbation.

"Ye're a pawkie callant," said she, slapping her hands on her knees, "an' nae doot ye'll prosper, like yer faither afore ye. And the weaver lads are maistly Hieland, ye say?"

"Ay, Kate; ye ken my mither was Hieland, sae we aye forgathered, an' though we ha'e na mickle Gaelic at Balmawhustle, we're 'aboon the pass' for a' that."

"Gi'e's a grup o' yer han', laddie. My mither cam' frae Ross, an' my hairt aye gi'e's a loup when I hear the Gaelic or see the tartans. But ye maun ca' cannie, Jamie; ye maunna loup afore ye can gang—siller got in haste's soon tint."

"Ay, and siller cannily got turns to gowd afore ye dee, and that's what mine'll

dae, forbye gi'ein' a helpin' han' to the weavers."

"My certie! Tod's a substantial chiel; he'll no misguide ye. He's a gran' business in St. Magus, an' as lang's he'll gi'e ye yer ain price for yer webs, I rede ye gang nae further, or ye may fare waur."

"Ay, ay, Kate," said James, rising, for he had no intention of going into minute details, or inviting advice from Kate; nor did he call at the Cottage that evening, lest it should be said that he was "fashing" Miss Mary with his affairs. He knew she would hear the news without his telling it, and so she did, for Phemie informed her next morning that the "hail toun was speakin' o' Jamie Dewar, an' hoo he was to be a kind o' agent for Tod o' the Candleriggs."

As for Kate, she remarked that "The day'll come that Jim Dewar 'll be a man o' substance, for he kens fine hoo to haud his tongue. He's no ane o' thae haverin' ne'er-do-weels that a body can jist turn inside out like an empty meal-pock."

Thus it befell that a tiny sum was growing in Dewar's hands for young Allan Graham during his childhood—a sum that represented as much careful thought and patient determination on his aunt's part as would go to the making of a colossal nineteenth century fortune.

The draper's agent had still no idea that the money he held in trust was accumulated for any better purpose than to minister to Miss Mary's personal needs. At times he supposed her to be laying by against the proverbial rainy day, yet

again, when his observant eye detected some minute economy, he felt a painful suspicion that she, whom he so esteemed, was, in Scottish phrase, somewhat "closer" than was becoming.

## CHAPTER IV.

ALLAN AND DUNCAN GRAHAM.

THE boy for whom Miss Mary sacrificed her daily comforts was not likely to attract attention from anyone less predisposed than she to love him. Reserved and silent, his parents, though they had seldom cause to blame, as seldom had cause to praise him. Mrs. McAndrew, the minister's wife, only echoed the general feeling when she said that the sons of the two Mistress Grahams might almost have been changed at their birth.

"Ay, indeed," said McHaffie, who was

stirring his hot toddy at the Manse table when the remark was made, "it's a curious thing to see the laddies; Allan with his square head and slow ways might just have been a grandson of old McVittie's, and who would think that of our young laird?"

"Who, indeed; his bonny smile and bold gait are just Captain Ian's over again."

"It's past finding out," said the minister, "and the cousins are as different at their book learning as at other things. Duncan's for jumping at conclusions; unwarrantable conclusions, too," he added, with a quiet laugh, "and he's aye just burning to tell of some creature he's shot, or a bit trout he's caught, when he should be fixing his mind on the humanities."



“And I warrant when Allan was stopping here you found that he learnt twice as soon,” said McHaffie.

“That he did,” replied the minister, sipping his toddy leisurely; “he’s quick at his books, and sets his mind to his task, never heeding Duncan, no more than if he were a chattering pyet.”

“Mark my words,” said McHaffie, “yon’s the lad that’ll get on. The young laird’s a fine laddie——”

“A fine laddie indeed! Will ye see his like in the countryside?” exclaimed Mrs. McAndrew, indignantly.

“I’m not saying ye will, Mrs. McAndrew. For looks and light-heartedness you’ll not easily find his equal, and we all know how far they go with the woman-kind. Allow me to say I admire your

taste, ma'am, but speaking as a business man, little Maister Allan will beat his handsome cousin out and out."

The writer's verdict was a correct one. The heir of Invermoy had the well-made limbs, the finely-set head, and natural grace usually associated with good birth. His plebeian mother seemed to have given him little, save her honesty of purpose and her good constitution; all the romance, the courage, and the chivalry of the Grams blossomed in this hope of the old house.

Jean was a wise woman, and did not seek to check his adventurous spirit, feeling instinctively that any such attempt would rouse her husband's ire; so she smothered her fears when the light-footed boy climbed some tall tree, or scrambled

down the rocky sides of the glen after birds'-nests, and endeavoured, poor soul, not to cry too visibly while dressing the frequent hurts, the pain of which he bore with a steady smile.

Once, indeed, she all but lost him, and the father's quiet countenance was blanched with fear as he hung over the bed where his son's insensible form lay. Duncan's skull showed to his dying day how narrowly he had escaped destruction when a stone slipped from under him, and he fell headlong, crushing in his hand the young falcon whose eyrie he had reached. Even Captain Graham was tempted to envy when he encountered him, flushed and laughing, galloping fearlessly along on a bare-backed pony, for the boy's spirit reminded him of his own merry youth,

and he knew that his own son would never awake in him the same sympathy. Sometimes he would vent his disappointment to his wife, but she, with a mother's faith, maintained that little Allan would grow up into a better man than his father expected.

"I'll never believe but that the son of Grant and Graham must be worthy of his blood, Ian," she would say, in her pretty Highland voice. A born Highlander was she from far Speyside. In that country of red rock and deep fir forest she had spent her childhood, and had been taught English as a needful though foreign tongue. A recruiting expedition took Ian Graham northwards on duty once, and then it was that he had carried back to the regiment a bit of the Grant badge to

wear next his heart, and the memory of a whispered promise and a clinging kiss to comfort his loneliness, till he should win his promotion and his wife.

Mrs. Graham had some grounds for believing that her son's nature was less common-place than it appeared, but she never told even her husband how, in a warm southern moonlight, when no sound save the challenge of a sentry broke the stillness, she had been moved to speak to him of her early home. She described to him the heather-crowned crag whose name was the war-cry of the clan ; she spoke of stout-hearted fellows who hid in their jackets bits of that heather that their sweetheart's fingers plucked for them ere they went to the wars ; and at last she told, in trembling tones, how her grand-

father, dying on the scaffold for his king, had walked calmly to his fate, and looking round on the alien faces below him, said, in a clear voice, "God save King James!" Being angrily desired to retract the words, he replied simply, "The Grants keep faith. Our war-cry is, 'Stand fast, Craig Ella-chie!'" and so laid his head on the block. Then the boy listener had covered his face with his hands, and burst into sudden sobs that shamed him too much to make comfort possible.

Captain Graham spent but little time in his own country during his son's boyhood, and was utterly unaware of the deep impression that his first visit to the north made on Allan.

Always shy and silent, neither of his parents suspected with what eagerness he

watched on the journey the rising border-hills that had been the territory of Armstrongs and Elliotts. Now, as evening shadows lengthened across them, he fancied that each hollow concealed a troop of moss-riders, and that the sunset gleaming on some distant rock was the first flash of a beacon flame.

Very home-like, too, was the sound of the broad accent that he had heard hitherto only from the men of his father's regiment, the —th Highlanders. What matter that his limbs were cramped, and his eyes weary, he was at last in that land the memory of which hushed even the rough soldiers, when one of their number sang,

“O it's hame, hame, hame wad I be,  
Hame, hame, in my ain countrie.”

Arrived at Invermoy, everything that

Allan saw and heard tended to intensify this feeling. Welcome alike at the Cottage and the House, he spent his time pretty equally between them, and learnt in each how deep can be the attachment of the Scot to the soil.

Things were no longer going as smoothly at Invermoy as when the Laird married. Times were hard, trade was bad, and the pressure began to be felt even in the quiet inland districts that had but little intercourse with the outside world.

In an evil hour a sanguine friend persuaded Invermoy to invest some money in one of the new flax mills that were the latest boast of St. Magus. He gave a promise over his toddy, for he, like the rest of the world, had "a tumbler" of a night, and he rued it bitterly in his reflec-



tions next morning. But a Graham never broke his word, and so the money was paid. It bore fruit for a few years, and then the crash came. The French Emperor laid a forbidding hand on British exports, and small traders were crushed by his jealous law. The little mills at St. Magus went among the first, and with them went Allan Graham's investments.

For himself he cared not a jot, but it was hard that his resources should be crippled just as the time was drawing near for Duncan to set out in life.

The Ian Grahams were with him when the trouble came, and in the family councils that ensued the two boys gathered a good deal of what was going on. The heir's light heart was not greatly disturbed; he grieved over his father's anxiety, but he

never doubted that things would come right "some day, when the French get the thrashing they deserve." His cousin saw deeper, saw that while the Laird was troubled about his boy, his greatest dread was that he might be obliged to mortgage an outlying farm. The mere thought was well nigh making him ill, for to touch the estate appeared to him a sort of sacrilege.

Miss Mary wrung her hands when the idea was mentioned, and no one suspected that the boy, who silently observed their grief, thoroughly understood the love they bore to "the old place."

When, after hearing part of a dreary discussion, Duncan rode off, that the fresh air might "blow away the dowie thoughts," Allan wandered along the river-side, thinking with a gravity beyond his years.

The rooks cawed dreamily above the tall beeches, the rabbits whisked in and out of their holes among the tangled roots, the water-ouzel perched boldly on the grey stones, hardly glancing from the sunlit water to the boy who strolled moodily along its banks. Allan Graham made a resolution in that quiet wood, that he was prepared to keep with the tenacity of his family. He knew that his father destined him, as a matter of course, for the same profession as himself, partly because there, and there alone, could he command any interest. He knew that Duncan was longing for the same destiny, and wondered how he, favoured as he was, could choose it.

His own soul rebelled against it utterly; he had seen in his father's regiment more

than enough of the privations, the partings, the anxieties of the military profession, and its rewards hardly allured him. His heart was set on a quiet country life, such as the Laird led, and his one ambition was to possess a piece of Scottish soil. How this was to be accomplished he had as yet no idea, but as he stood beneath his cousin's beeches, he vowed that some day he would stand beneath trees that he could call his own. Not grand hoary trunks such as these; the man who has his own fortune to make would hardly obtain land such as Invermoy's ancestors had left him; but something, some corner of his native country, he would assuredly win for himself.

With characteristic honesty he told his parents that evening that he could not be

a soldier, adding, hesitatingly, that perhaps his father might use his interest in his cousin Duncan's behalf. Such unheard-of self-assertion astounded his father, so that he said little at first, only inquiring sarcastically what he intended doing with himself.

"I don't know, father. I'd like to be in some business—a West Indian merchant's house, if I can. Or, better still, if I could get into the Company's service."

"Diaoul!" exclaimed Captain Graham, who sometimes took refuge in Gaelic when excited, "do you mean to say that my son is going into a dirty office, rather than enter the only profession fit for a gentleman? Why, I shall be tempted to think you are a coward, sir!"

"That is a——" began Allan, vehement.

ly, but his mother laid her hand on his mouth.

"Hush! my son, show your courage by your patience. Don't be hard on him, Ian," she continued, turning pleadingly to her husband. "God knows it is cruel enough in these terrible times to have you in the army, I may be thankful that Allan has no wish to join it too."

"That's not the way you used to talk, Elsie, in your young days."

"I didn't understand the misery of it then. Ian, you know how proud I was of your success when you came home last, but you don't know what I have suffered in those awful hours when I knew you were in danger. Don't grudge me my boy's safety."

Mrs. Graham knew well that the recollec-

tion of their meeting after the campaign in Egypt would soften her husband's sternest mood, and she pled thus for her son, though in her secret heart she all but regretted his decision.

Captain Graham, who read her every thought, refrained from further comment, but his tenderness to her told her that he guessed at her disappointment, and between him and his boy there grew up a greater barrier than before. To him and to his wife no honour on earth seemed comparable with the soldier's, no death more glorious than his. They would have echoed the song of the chief who, apostrophising his home, boasts that no son of that ancient house ever died on mat or bed, but all fell, sword in hand, beneath the open eye of Heaven.

It was speedily clear that Duncan Graham was as anxious as his cousin was averse to be a soldier. He was like a young eaglet longing to soar, and his mother only would have sought to check him.

"Speak to him, Mary," she said to Miss Graham, who was sitting at the spinnet that filled a corner of the Invermoy drawing-room. "Can ye no bid him bide amang his ain folk instead of stravaguing to yon awfu' wars?"

"It's little use bidding, Jean, when the laddie's heart's set on being a soldier. Ye can't keep a wild spirit from having its way."

"That's right, Cousin Mary," said the delighted lad, coming up to the instrument, "you'd like to see me such a soldier



as Cousin Ian or your father, wouldn't you now ?”

“ Ay, Duncan, you couldn't strive to be like braver or better men,” replied Miss Mary, flushing as she thought of her soldier kin.

“ Just so. Play me the march of Coilean-na-Ruach, Cousin Mary !” exclaimed Duncan ; and as the stirring notes burst forth, he beat time sharply with his fingers, and listened with the same keen look on his face that shone on that of the player.

When the final chord died, the boy kissed her.

“ Never talk of my biding at home ; you wouldn't be a Graham if your heart didn't warm to that tune. I'll come home some

day with a medal or two, and you shall play that march to welcome me, Cousin Mary."

He went off whistling gaily, and there was silence in the drawing-room. The mother shrunk from something in those last words; she was not born a Graham, and those two had something in common as their eyes met during the music that she could not share. What was it—that strange feeling that made a name, an air, a legend—such a bond between people unlike in age and character? Was there anyone who loved her boy as she did? Had anyone watched, tended, and thought of him as she had done? Yet here, because she could not understand this mad desire to thrust himself into danger, he passed

her by and turned to Miss Mary for sympathy, and she understood him, for she was "a Graham!"

It was all an inscrutable mystery to poor Jean, one of the crosses of her lot to be borne meekly.

Not for worlds would the Laird have endeavoured to restrain his son's ardour, though his heart misgave him sorely, and he wished his wife could have talked the matter calmly over with him. He saw that she was not strong-hearted enough to do so, and he was even tempted to turn like his son to Miss Mary for consolation, but his loyalty to Jean forbade him, so he endured silently, as he had learnt to do in his younger days.

Thus it happened that, when the French prisoners were dragging their weary limbs

through the village of Invermoy, and Jean was weeping under the horse-chestnut, her son, then just eighteen, was sitting in a modest London drawing-room, awaiting his ship, and learning in the interim lessons of love from the hazel eyes of Ellen Barton, his host's eldest daughter.

The Reverend William Barton, Rector of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, was a widower, connected through his deceased wife with distant cousins of the Grahams. To these cousins Allan Graham had written when the time came for Duncan to go to London, and in a kindly letter they had recommended him to the Rector's good offices, who could do no less than propose that the lad should come to his house. He grumbled to his girls as he made the offer, for he expected his guest to be both

uncouth and full of northern prejudices. He was agreeably surprised to find him a handsome, intelligent youth, who, if rustic enough in some ways, was unmistakably a gentleman, and was very soon on the friendliest terms with the family.

Duncan's eager, glad nature expanded under the softer influences of English life. As he travelled southwards, he felt the contrast between the dull grey tints of the north and the bright gardens ablaze with roses. He enjoyed the air, full of scents of mignonette and sweet-peas, and admired the rich colouring of the brick cottages nestling among glossy evergreens, or clad with luxuriant creepers.

If the country impressed, London bewildered him, and the Bartons smiled to see this stalwart young Scot appealing to them

for enlightenment in what seemed mere common-places of town life. He soon grew used, however, to the stir and bustle, and ceased to be angry if some one jostled him in a crowd, while his frank delight in all he saw made him an agreeable inmate.

It was a pleasant quartette that sat down to dinner in the Rector's little dining-room. He was a genial-hearted man, and loved to draw out his young guest's opinions, enjoying his simple frankness as he would the flavour of freshly-gathered fruit.

The polish of the two young ladies awed Graham at first; he hardly dared address them, being dimly aware that in some way they were different from his mother and Miss Mary—different even from the country ladies who arrived occasionally in their

lumbering coaches to pay their stated yearly visit of three days at Invermoy. They were, indeed, more grandly dressed than these two girls, but somehow their clothes had not the same style; they did not hang in such graceful folds, and, moreover, the wearers had that unbending air of being dressed for company that detracts from the beauty of the best toilette.

Duncan could not have told wherein the difference lay; he only knew that, after his first surprise was past, a comfortable feeling of ease stole over him, and he felt more at home in the Rector's house than he had ever done out of Invermoy. His manhood prompted him to pay little attentions to these gentle girls, and though he seemed to himself to perform such acts of

courtesy with the awkwardness of a peasant, he could not but perceive that they were welcome, and that he was an object of some interest to two pair of bright eyes. Ellen's were the brightest, and looked at him with greater frankness than her sister's, and before long Duncan returned her look with interest, and even acknowledged to himself that a delay which took place in fitting out the ship was by no means unwelcome to him.

"You expect to be gone very soon, Graham, don't you?" said the Rector, one night after the former had paid a visit to the Horse Guards.

"Yes, the ship is nearly ready; I don't think they can keep us waiting much longer."

"It is hard on your parents that you



should have spent so many days here instead of with them. I wonder your father at least did not come with you; he would have enjoyed a visit to the capital."

"No doubt, but he was prevented—I mean he could not come," stammered Duncan, whose pride made him shrink from avowing that the cost of the journey had been the chief difficulty.

"Ah, well, I daresay he has plenty to do at home," continued the Rector; "he must grudge your going, for you are his only son."

"My father would not like me to be a useless stay-at-home, sir," said Duncan, smiling.

"Not necessarily useless," said Agnes,

the second daughter, raising her quiet eyes ; "there is enough for a gentleman to do without going to these dreadful wars."

"Not for me, Miss Agnes ; my father can take care of the estate, and I should have my time on my hands. Besides, I don't go merely because I lack occupation at home."

"No, indeed !" exclaimed Ellen, who sat at the head of the table ; "you go because you love to be a soldier."

"Yes, Miss Barton, I do."

"Yet it is a fearful profession," said her father, thoughtfully. "Every time one hears of a victory, one cannot but think of the cost."

"Think of the honour too, sir !"

"Honour!" cried Agnes; "how can there be honour in slaying your fellow-men?"

"You are severe on us, Miss Agnes; I can only appeal to your sister, she understands my feeling, I am sure."

"Oh, yes," said Ellen, with deepening colour. "When I read the despatches, I think how proud those brave men must feel who know they have helped to win a battle for their country."

"It was always the same, Ellen," said her sister, as they rose from the table; "when we were children, you never cared for any history except of battles. You ought to have been a boy that you might have joined the army yourself."

"As that is impossible, you should be a soldier's wife," said Duncan, in a low

voice ; and though the Rector did not hear the remark, he noted the two earnest faces, and engaged his youngest daughter in conversation forthwith, thinking, good man, that time was short, and that it would be no bad thing if this gallant young fellow were to woo his high-spirited girl.

Duncan was not slow to take advantage of his opportunities. Love's language is classical, and he graduated rapidly in it, so that before the fatal day of departure came, he had asked the Rector for the promise of his daughter's hand. The old man's consent was readily given, and then quiet Agnes fled away to her own room at a hint from her father, and the lovers were left to tell the old, old story, and to wonder at their own happiness.

For the first time Duncan felt a dread of the inevitable separation, realizing through his own pain, with a touch of compunction, that which his mother had endured.

But there was much to do, and little space for reflection. He had to write a farewell to his father, announcing his engagement; he had his preparations to finish, including the stowing away of hose and other comforts received at the last moment from Scotland; and out of his scanty funds he had to provide the engagement ring which should satisfy his fanciful taste, and tell the world of his claim on its wearer.

Ellen Barton passed the last night that her lover would spend under their roof in tearless watching, and when the sun rose above the dull mass of red brick houses

that crowded those shapeless suburbs, she turned from her window, and went away quietly to rouse the servant, for the detachment with which Duncan was to march was under orders for an early start.

Breakfast was eaten sadly, and the two girls hardly spoke, though the Rector tried to talk of Duncan's return, and the boy himself was alternately full of eager hope and sunk in depression. When the meal was over, and the last minute had come, the others left the room, and the two who had had so brief a wooing were alone. Then Ellen's resolution gave way, and she strained her lover in her arms, saying piteously,

"I never knew before what it was to pray, Duncan, but now I shall be tempted to live on my knees."

"My own, you mustn't be too downcast. Try to think I shall come back to you—as I pray the Lord I may," he added, reverently.

"I know, I know, but the fear will never leave me. Oh! if I were only going with you!"

"I wish you were; but Spain is no place for an English lady just now. Keep up your heart; and, Ellen, you must let me go."

Duncan had left Invermoy with a smile on his lips, but he was grave enough as he turned down the Strand, and once or twice, as he hurried along, he passed his hand across his eyes. Nevertheless there was not a cheerier face than his on board the good ship, as she ploughed across the stormy waters of the Bay, nor was there a

more hopeful or gallant heart among the eager soldiers, who, on landing, were met by the welcome order to proceed at once to the front.

We must now turn back to that afternoon when Mrs. Jean was still shedding tears over the "rig and fur" of her son's hose, and the Laird was wending his way to the village to see the arrival of the Frenchmen. Apparently all the population had been gathered in the little open space in front of the churchyard ; it could not be called a square, since the houses jutted in upon it irregularly, none of the builders having consulted anything but their individual convenience.

Some of the houses had outer stairs to their upper flats, and these were a great



vantage-ground to the gazers. In one corner, too, the village pump, a quaint construction of stone and wood, served as a kind of perch to Hughie Morrison and one or two of his fellows.

Seated on the low wall that surrounded the churchyard, where the shadow of the ruined cathedral fell across it, Kate Macrae kept up her usual stream of conversation, as neighbour after neighbour joined the increasing crowd.

Grouped at the opposite side, under the shade of a solitary sycamore, stood the *élite* of Invermoy. There the minister discoursed of parish troubles to Miss Mary, while his wife emphasized portions of the tale; there the schoolmaster and his better-half chimed in, as occasion offered, with anecdotes of juvenile wicked-

ness ; there Invermoy himself lingered, except when he saw some farmer to whom he had a word to say. There, lastly, came Mr. McHaffie, somewhat ashamed of such lengthened idleness, and anxious to excuse himself, though his eyes twinkled as he declared that he was just on his way to his house for a book, in which to look up a decision of which he stood in need. His partner remained sourly in the office, keeping his door ajar that he might be certain that neither of the clerks escaped from the adjoining room in which they toiled. So James Dewar could only give a surreptitious glance at the new-comers as they passed up the narrow street ; and, in sooth, there was nothing to see but what might have moved the spectators to compassion.

Bronzed and scarred, some with soiled bandages bound round recent wounds, ragged, and many of them shoeless, the wretched prisoners, as they dragged themselves wearily into the square, were indeed a pitiful sight.

They ought by rights to have gone straight to the gaol, but their guardians had a fellow-feeling with the lookers-on, and perhaps it was the same sentiment that caused the old gaoler to be so long in opening the heavy gates. Whatever the reason, the strangers, about a hundred in number, drew up in the square, while the officer in charge of the party went to confer with the gatekeeper, and the pensioner who assisted him to look after the building and its occasional inmates.

When the dust had subsided, the gazing

circle drew a little closer, staring as though such olive faces belonged to some different part of the creation.

No one recognised the fact that these were hungry and thirsty men, needing pity, and no one could have exchanged a syllable with them. But there is a common language of expression, and some of the prisoners used it. Across the square, where assuredly she had no business to be, came little Phemie, bearing Miss Mary's afternoon jug of milk. Absorbed in staring like her neighbours, she neither saw that her mistress was behind her, nor that a pale boy was looking with terrible longing at the full jug. But Miss Mary saw, and coloured violently as she debated whether she should try to utter the French words that she knew, when she saw them

in print, meant, "Are you thirsty?" The lad looked up and met her glance, the only one that betrayed any sympathy, and he pointed to the jug, and held out his hands in piteous appeal. To the surprise of everyone, Miss Mary seized the jug, and thrusting it into them, nodded her head energetically, while pointing in her turn to the men nearest her. The jug was emptied in a twinkling, and no one could misunderstand the grateful murmur of reply.

"Eh, Miss Mary, ye'll ha'e nae milk to yer dish o' tea!" ejaculated Phemie; "and——"

"Presairve me, Miss Mary! Are ye gi'en' drink to yon carles that ha'e, maybe, sent some o' oor laddies to their lang hame?" cried Mrs. Murdoch, quite in-

capable of restraining herself in presence of such conduct as this.

Before Miss Mary could reply the minister had spoken, raising his voice so as to be heard beyond the immediate circle.

“Miss Mary puts us a’ to shame! Wad ye tak’ vengeance on them that are strangers in a far country, and unco weary? Is yon the charity o’ St. Paul?”

“Well said, Mr. McAndrew,” broke in the Laird, to whom had come a sudden thought of Duncan, his bright boy. How, if he were to be a prisoner some day in the hands of the foe, would he not bless anyone who gave him a cup of cold water? The idea made him quick to act, and the villagers followed his lead. Friendly hands brought water or milk, and some even

added a scone or a bit of oatcake, so that the prisoners, accustomed to insufficient and long-delayed rations, had good cause to bless the village that had appeared to them at first sight so grey and inhospitable.

At a loss to make their thanks sufficiently understood, and perceiving that Miss Mary was a person of note, one of them seized a corner of her shawl, and raised it to his lips, while the doffed caps and hearty "*Dieu vous bénisse*" of the rest conveyed an equal meaning.

Some of the crowd jeered at the foreign demonstrativeness, but crowds must of necessity contain some meagre spirits, and the larger-hearted echoed Kate's remark, when she ejaculated,

"Eh, puir laddies, they've kind hairts o'

their ain, an' I doubtna their mithers are wae this day."

But now the officer came forward uttering peremptory orders, while the big gates yawning behind them reminded the prisoners that this was but the good-fellowship of a moment.

With smiles, nods, and the all-expressive Gallic shrug, they faced round and filed two and two under the arched gateway. As the green gates clanged after them, the gazers dispersed, the idle lounging away in groups, the busy hurrying off double quick, as though to overtake the wasted minutes.

Kate Macrae trudged quietly back to her shop, as became one whose affairs were always in order, and to whom flurry was unknown. With her went old Elspeth



Morrison and Mrs. Murdoch, hopeful of a glass of something, and at least sure of a chat.

“Yon was a daft-like thing,” quoth Mrs. Murdoch, “to see yon callant kissin’ Miss Mary’s auld white shawl; it garred her turn as reid’s a berry.”

“Ay, did it,” replied Elspeth, “but they’re unco strange. I canna thole French folk. I’ve heerd tell they eat wee dogs, an’ frogs, an’ a’ kind o’ vermin, the ne’er-do-weels!”

“And the women wear muckle shoon o’ wood, an’ the men ha’e gowd rings in their lugs.”

“Ay, I seed twa three o’ thae sodgers wi’ them,” said Kate.

“It’s an awfu’ country to send oor

sodgers to lay their banes in," said Elspeth, shaking her grey head; her only son, Hughie's father, was in Captain Graham's regiment.

"They're no in France," replied Kate.  
 "Dinna ye ken they're in Spain?"

"Ou, it's a' ane," replied the old woman,  
 "no a cogie o' parritch nor a plate o' broth they'll get there, I'se warrant ye!  
 And no a kirk nor a minister to gar them gang in the narrow way; it'll be a' braid roads there, I'm thinkin', an' an awful destruction at the end o' them!"

"Weel, weel, Elspeth, ye mind what the minister said the Sabbath afore the young laird gaed awa'; eh, yon was a powerfu' discourse, an' nae wonder puir Mrs. Graham grat to hear it. He said the sodgers

were gaun to hurl yon wud tyrant Napoleon frae the throne, an' it was righteous wark, an' we maun pray the Lord to be aboot their ways."

"It's the de'il's wark tae," said Elspeth, unconvinced. "He that tak's the sword maun perish by the sword, an' Invermoy may rue the day yon bonnie bairn gaed awa'. My Allister's awa' tae, an' they maun baith dree their weird."

"Whisht, whisht, woman!" exclaimed Mrs. Murdoch, "ye needna cry thief till the gowd's tint; wad ye ha'e Maister Duncan bide at hame like an auld wife? What passes me is, what for Invermoy didna pit him in the Captain's regiment, and then there wad ha'e been ane o' his ain folk beside him."

"Losh! did ye no hear?" asked Kate,

who had spread the news widely enough as soon as it reached her.

“Na!” said Mrs. Murdoch, sharply. Kate was a thorn in her side, for she too loved to bring the newest tale to the market-place.

“There wasna a place in the Captain’s regiment for a wee whilie, and Maister Duncan he was that anxious to be awa’ that the Laird e’en tellt them to pit him in ony ither that wad gang at ance.”

“Weel, he might ha’e bidit; but I maun be steppin’, Kate, the minister ’ll mention the family in the prayer, come Sabbath, ye kent that?”

“’Deed no!” said Kate, extinguished in her turn. It was true she generally had the first news of anything that happened at the House, but there was no denying

that Mrs. Murdoch was better informed as to the manse affairs; her cousin was servant there, and all Kate's friendliness had not succeeded in making her communicative; perhaps she suspected a motive in her overtures.

"It was Jeanie Caird tellt me," said Mrs. Murdoch; "she was clearin' awa' the dishes, an' she heard the minister say to Mrs. McAndrew that Invermoy was but dowie an' Mrs. Graham was aye greeting, an' Mrs. McAndrew speired at him if he wadna say a word in the kirk for them, an' Jean she stood wi' the tray, an' he said, ay, they've mickle need."

"It's a visitation frae the Lord!" said Elspeth, striking her stick on the ground, "and wae be unto the people that dinna regard it! It's no for ae laddie or anither

we suld pray. Was there a prayer in the kirk when my Allister marched awa' ? The minister maun pit awa' a' sic thochts, an' say the Lord help the richt !"

"Hoot toot, cummer," said Mrs. Murdoch, who was used to Elspeth's wild speeches, since they lived next door to each other, "ye're hawering ! Folk aye pray for them that they ken ; I'm sure I'll say the Lord help the young laird's regiment, richt or wrang, an' the minister, gude man, wull be thinkin' the same."

"Peggy Murdoch !" began Elspeth, raising her hands in horror, but Kate cut her short.

"Ye'll jist come ben an' ha'e a bit supper, cummers ; maybe ye're richt, an' maybe ye're wrang, but ony way, gin ye canna

gree aboot the war, ye'll ha'e nae quarrel  
wi' a cake an' a bit o' kebbuck."

Kate was right, and the trio sat down  
to supper cosily. Kebbuck was easier to  
discuss than morality, and they forgot their  
theological differences in agreement on the  
merits of the "twopenny."

## CHAPTER V.

## CONCHA.

**I**T is a clear October day in sunny Castile ; the endless vineyards are tinged with the warm red brown of autumn ; the woods, that here and there rise darkly above the vines, are crested and fringed with gold and crimson, for the outermost leaves are losing their summer hue, while the deep recesses are yet green. The roads are rough and dusty, for the hot sun has pulverised them, and loosened every bedded stone. Thirsty weather this, and thirsty work it is for troops hurrying



along in dense columns, each man swallowing some of the dust raised by those in front. Sullen men they are, too, their dogged English temper brooding and chafing, till their faces wear an aspect very different from that which brightened them when they marched gaily along this very road just four weeks ago. No wonder they are savagely sullen, for they have left many a corpse behind them ; the prize they toiled hard to gain has been just touched and lost, and now they are in full retreat towards they know not what haven. Very trying this for soldiers to whom victory has become almost a common-place ; besides, hardships press lightly when the foe is in front, but they smite the very heart when that foe dogs your heels.

“ D——n the dust, and the French, and

---

the lazy, unhelpful Spaniards, and, above all, that proud Castle of Burgos, where the garrison sits securely at this hour! We've marched miles enough—surely we can halt in this white village and get a meal—get drink, too; the Spaniards can make wine, if they can't fight, and the dust might choke a river. Yes, there go the bugles sounding the halt, and there's sure to be wine enough and to spare, for there are stores somewhere in these parts, and we can drink the liquor meant for the sleepy townsfolk in Madrid."

So the men betake themselves in crowds to Venta and Posada, and bully the startled peasants, demanding wine instantly.

There is not much better cheer among the officers, though they know pretty well what their General is after. They are

disgusted with their ill-luck, being aware that only a little siege material was needed to have made them victors where now they were—well, retiring.

Nevertheless, as in duty bound, they grumbled quietly, and kept a sharp watch over the sullen troops. The halt was to be a long one, they fancied, and there would be time to eat their dinners at their leisure, though the old campaigners hurried its preparation, in case of accidents.

The —th Guards were in the centre of the straggling village, and half-a-dozen of their officers gathered in a low upper room in one of the Posadas. Young fellows these, cheery, and not much troubled about the strategy of the campaign, so long as enough hard work, and conse-

quent honour, fell to the share of their regiment. •

“By George,” ejaculated one of them, throwing down his shako, “I’m half choked with this infernal dust !”

“Lucky for us, for you’ll want the less dinner, Gordon, and I doubt if there’s much forthcoming,” said another, laughing as he unbuckled his sword-belt.

“Sorry to hear it. I wonder when we shall get enough to eat again ? It’ll be an extraordinary variety when we do.”

“Yes, we’re not in danger of over-feeding, certainly.”

“And I wonder when we shall get hold of our baggage again. A clean shirt is becoming a rare luxury with me.”

“My dear fellow, I shall have none left at all in a couple of days. In this confounded

retreat everything goes to the deuce."

"I wish we were at the end of it. The men are as sulky as bears, and if they get at liquor we shall be in a precious mess."

"Yes, I suppose if the enemy were going to open fire they'd drink still. That was a nasty brush yesterday."

"Uncommonly nasty, and nothing to be got by it. Killed in the retreat doesn't read well in the *Gazette*."

"Egad, no, it doesn't. I wouldn't like that to go home," said Duncan Graham, for he it was, bronzed and thin, but as gay as ever. "But here's the dinner, fall to!"

"Irish stew, by St. Patrick," said the senior present, Captain Gordon, uncovering a coarse delf dish which had been planted askew on the rickety table. "We're going

to fare sumptuously to-day; black bread, greyish salt, plates and knives *à l'ordinaire*."

"Oh! never mind the plates and knives. I've forgotten the look of clean ones by this time," said another. "Now deal fair, Gordon, and don't keep a double portion for Benjamin here."

"No, indeed, Gordon," laughed Duncan, who was so great a favourite with his captain that he had obtained this sobriquet. "Give me my fair share, though. I think the supply will just go round."

"Smoking hot it is, too. It's lucky we're not in a hurry."

"Yes, it is," replied Gordon, and then paused in his occupation, listening intently. "Confound it!" he cried. "Do you hear that horse clattering along the street? What's up?"

Everyone rushed to the window, and deep were the groans when an aide-de-camp drew bridle below it, and called out that the brigade was to march instantly. Two minutes more and the bugles were sounding on all sides.

"Oh! hang it," said Duncan, "I must have some food. Can one swallow this boiling?"

Laughing, jesting, and speculating as to the cause of this fresh move, the lads managed to consume most of the meagre portions of tough mutton set before them. Swallowing hasty draughts of the light wine, and cramming all the bread they could find into their haversacks, they clattered down the narrow wooden stairs, and so away to their respective companies.

The start was not made a moment too

soon; faces that were only sullen a while ago, were beginning to wear a flush of vinous anger, and had Lord Wellington remained twenty-four hours in the village, he might well have feared the enemy's pursuit. He was too wise to run any such risk, and the army made a forced march, which, though it tried the endurance of the men, left them no time for mischief. Evening was falling when the tired vanguard crossed a quaint stone bridge that spanned the river Carrion. A rising-ground in front was to be their resting-place for an entire day, and the weary steps quickened as there appeared on the distant slope a dim mass of the familiar red, a fresh brigade newly arrived from home.

If the soldiers were weary, the officers



were well-nigh exhausted when they reached their quarters. Reproving, encouraging, and cheering their men, the day for them had been one of incessant toil, and Duncan Graham, as he threw himself on the sun-baked turf, thought that his chosen profession had never seemed less delightful. Hitherto he had enjoyed its excitements, laughed at its discomforts, and had learnt to face its dangers with as much equanimity as most of those around him. His initiation had been a speedy one, for he had joined on the morning of a day when French and English had lain watchfully gazing at each other across the shallow bed of the noisy Guarena.

At noon there was a glitter of movement on the French left, as promptly responded to by a stir on the other side.

Presently fretting horses felt the welcome spur, and Duncan, trembling with excitement, strained his eyes to see through the rising dust the sweeping movements of the cavalry. Beside him stood a handsome lad, whose Scottish blood had made him "forgather" at once with Graham.

"Zounds! those fellows have the best of it! I almost wish I'd gone into the Lancers!" cried Duncan, as the 17th tore across the open.

"Do you? Wait till you see the way the French horse go down round our squares."

"Do ours go down before them, though?" asked Duncan, who was at that stage of military enthusiasm that believes everything possible to the enthusiast's side.

“Egad, I can’t say! We haven’t too many cavalry, and Lord Wellington don’t waste them. I like my own line best. I don’t care to trust to a horse’s safety, I prefer my own——”

The skirmish had drawn nearer, a regiment of English infantry was under arms, a chance French shot or two whizzed by, and young Campbell fell dead at Duncan’s feet.

The lad’s blood seemed to curdle as he looked down at the still face, so bright an instant ago, and it was with a sick heart that he perceived the fatal drops staining the red tunic below the heart. Before a week had elapsed he had seen corpses by the hundred, but not one of them haunted his memory as this one did. The brain photographs clearly the single instance of suf-

fering, while the misery of a crowd produces only a blurred picture.

Duncan was barely eighteen, and since he left his quiet home the realities of life had forced themselves rapidly upon him. For an instant, while standing beside Campbell's body, he felt as though he had launched himself into a stream too strong for him. Inexperienced and alone, with a woman's happiness depending on his safety, and death like a perpetual presence round him, no wonder the boy's heart almost failed him. Happily he bethought himself of his cousin, and the idea gave him comfort, his mood not being collected enough for him to reflect that the —th Highlanders were at that moment many miles away, and that Captain Graham's position was, for the nonce, more exposed than his own.

Two days later he had gained confidence in himself, for he had been tried, and found not less staunch than his companions.

His regiment was one of those sent to execute the emphatic order, "Drive those fellows to the devil!" and as they dashed on, though cavalry spurred and guns blazed at them, till the rugged hillside was their own, Duncan felt the wild exultation that in every age and clime animates the true soldier. Salamanca made a man of him, and Ellen Barton perceived the change when she compared his graphic account of the battle with the boyish letters that were already becoming worn at the folds from frequent perusal.

But Salamanca sounded one note, triumph's joyous fanfare, and Burgos struck quite another.

After the former, Duncan's thoughts, save for a brief thankfulness, ran chiefly on his dinner, with a merry toast or two, to be followed by a good night's sleep. After the latter, they turned to Ellen—for does not every man know that the woman he forgets in his lighter moods comes to his memory as though meekly waiting to comfort him in his sorrows? He knew that he has thought but little of late of his promised bride; the bright panorama around him had drawn itself like a highly-coloured screen before the remembrance of the little drawing-room near the Strand.

Now, however, his long march over, as he lay stretched beside the picquet fire, recollections of that pleasant house thronged upon him, and he wondered, half sadly, if he was destined to be among the fortunate

number of those who would return home, and be greeted as the heroes of the hour. He seemed to see again Ellen's streaming eyes uplifted to his, to feel her clinging hands, and hear the sobs that choked her last good-bye. All his immediate surroundings melted away in the vivid picturing of those bitter moments, and he closed his eyes and hid his face on his arm.

A sudden sound, as of a sentry challenging sharply, struck on his ear, and in an instant he was alert and on his feet.

It was a wonderful scene that lay before him. The moon gleamed now and again from behind scudding clouds, and showed the hillside covered with white tents, and reddened here and there with the glow of dying camp-fires. Beside him the men of

the picquet slept soundly by the embers in their dark cloaks, and the corporal, seeing him rise, threw on some brushwood that crackled into bluish flame. From across the camp came the faint notes of a parting chorus, but not another sound was heard save that challenge repeated.

Catching up a torch, and telling a couple of men to follow him, Duncan hurried off to the spot. The bushes grew thickly to the right of the picquet, and from out of them came the plaintive cry of a child. The sentry said he had heard the sound of a horse's feet, and pushing through the branches in the direction pointed out to him, Duncan and his men came on a singular group.

Huddled into the deepest shadow were three mules, two of them held by a swarthy



muleteer, whose attitude betrayed intense terror. One of the animals was laden with baggage; on the saddle of another sat a little boy of about six years old; while the third was ridden by a lady muffled in a dark cloak, which she drew over the head of a baby in her arms, so as to make his crying less audible.

The most remarkable figure was that of a young girl of about four-and-twenty, who stood in front of the party, one hand holding a small dagger, while with the other she signed to the boy to be silent. She was dressed in the rough cloth, the paño Burgueño of a peasant, but the black scarf tied round her head and face did not conceal the brilliancy of the eyes that scanned the thicket with such keenness. A ray of moonlight fell full on her as the

clouds drifted away, and Duncan thought he had never seen anything like the fearless grace and spirit of her attitude. As he drew nearer to her he returned his sword to its scabbard, saying to the men that there did not appear to be any danger here, and bidding them bring the muleteer forward, while one of them held the mules.

It was soon obvious that nothing could be elicited from the Spaniard, whose muttered invocations to the Virgin, and apparent stupidity, might be the result of fear.

Giving up the attempt to question him, Duncan turned to the women, and as he did so intercepted an angry glance that made him suspect his dark-visaged prisoner to be more sullen than ignorant.

“What’s that fellow gripping under his cape? Look and see, Stewart,” said he.

“A pistol, sir, and loaded, too,” replied the man.

“I thought so. Keep a sharp eye on him, and tie his arms if he’s troublesome.”

The tone of command made the lady on the mule shrink, and she exclaimed in alarm as she saw the weapon wrenched from Paco’s belt. Duncan asked her, in very poor Spanish, where she was going, and how she came to be so near the English lines; but her reply, poured forth with southern volubility and imploring gestures, was far beyond his power to comprehend. Seeing his bewilderment, she pointed to the girl, who had hardly moved or taken her eyes off his face. To her he repeated his question, and was much relieved when she

answered slowly and distinctly, speaking partly in Spanish, partly in French, in which she saw that he best understood her. Her voice was silvery and well modulated, and she did not for a moment lose her self-possession, while she informed him that her mistress was travelling across to the town of Soria, where her husband's relatives resided. Owing to the disturbed state of the country they had come by by-roads, but the bridge by which they intended crossing at Villa Muriel being blown up by the English, they had pushed on, hoping to find a ford, but Paco there, and she pointed at the unfortunate muleteer, had lost his way, and brought them into this dilemma.

"I fear I must detain you," said Duncan, "at least till to-morrow. But you need

THE GRAHAMS OF INVERMOY.

e alarmed," he added, as the lady  
e again into lamentations, "you can  
come to the picquet, and we will do what  
we can for you till morning. Can I assist  
you to mount?"

"Is it far, Señor?"

"Not five minutes' walk, but it is dark,  
and the way is rough."

"No matter, I will walk," said the girl,  
taking the bridle of one of the mules, and  
at the same time throwing her arm round  
the boy to steady him. He turned to her  
eagerly, but Duncan heard a whispered  
warning, and the child sat up again, as  
silent as before, though evidently half  
asleep with fatigue.

They soon reached the picquet, where a  
clear space was made for them by the fire,  
for it was the chilliest hour of the night.

Paco's restless hands had to be secured, and he crouched by his mules, muttering to himself, while Graham and one of his men aided the lady to unfasten such wraps as were needed. The boy, tired and cold, began to sob quietly, in spite of the nurse's caressing attempts to soothe him, till Duncan, taking off his own overcoat, laid it by the fire, and stooping over him, asked him to come and sleep. The child lifted his head from his nurse's shoulder, looked in Graham's face, then stretched out his little arms confidingly, and was soon asleep, rolled up in the warm coat.

The lady expressed but little gratitude for the help afforded her, but the maid's bright eyes thanked Graham more eloquently than her lips, and as he watched her slight figure bending over the sleeping

children, he thought the presence of such prisoners in the camp would be by no means unwelcome.

Such was not the opinion of the authorities, who, when the morning came, were so unwilling to encumber themselves in any way during this hasty retreat, that the ladies would in all probability have been permitted to proceed, had it not been for the rash speeches of the nurse, who acted in great part as spokeswoman and interpreter. Her mistress was to all appearance a quiet, timid woman, whose embarrassment, when questioned by the officers, was painfully evident; nor was her account of herself quite consistent. She professed at first to be on her way to Soria, where she was to meet her husband, but finally admitted that he was the Capi-

tano Gomersalez, a Spanish officer. This gentleman had seemingly left his wife in total ignorance of his movements, for that portion of the Spanish force with which she believed him to be employed was at that moment miles away from the spot she named.

At this blunder the Englishmen exchanged glances, and Graham observed the nurse's pretty foot tapping impatiently on the ground, while she looked from one to the other, as though to guess the tenor of their remarks. At this moment a sergeant approached, leading the little boy, and holding in his hand a crumpled envelope.

"What is it, sergeant?" said the officer nearest him.

"I think these are French folk, sir;



here's an envelope the child was playing with, and the name caught my eye."

"Looks uncommonly like it," said the officer, examining the envelope, while the boy, whose lip was quivering, burst into a cry of—"Mamma, I didn't mean any harm!"

The lady caught him up, and spoke to him rebukingly, but the nurse, whose olive cheeks were deeply flushed, exclaimed abruptly in French,

"It is no use lying, Messieurs; that letter is from the boy's father, who is an officer in the French army." She drew herself up as she said this, as though relieved to have spoken the truth at all hazards.

"Your mistress will hardly thank you for that statement, young woman," said

one of the officers, somewhat sternly, and the girl shrank back, and bent over the baby in her arms, while the lady, after one quick look at her, spoke more calmly than she had done hitherto.

“Concha is right; the Capitaine d’Arblanc is in the Lanciers Rouges, as you see by that paper. You will surely not prevent a poor wife from joining her husband, gentlemen?”

“I am sorry, madam,” replied the Colonel, “we cannot allow you to pass through our lines to join Souham’s army. You may be assured of kind treatment, but you must retrace your steps with us; probably, when you reach cantonments, you will be permitted to proceed.”

This decision once made, Madame d’Arblanc accommodated herself with great

good-humour to the change in her destination, showing less anxiety than Concha, whose pretty eyes were often glistening with tears.

As for little Antonio, he and Graham became fast friends; he was a high-spirited boy, eager to observe, and continually slipping away from his mother to run beside the soldiers, and question them in a mixed dialect of his own about their accoutrements and occupations.

It was Concha's duty then to pursue and capture him, and more than once, when he had found his way to Graham's side, a friendly conversation took place between the two before the culprit was borne away. The girl interested and puzzled, while her beauty attracted him, and her mode of expressing herself, no less than her white,

well-shaped hands, seemed to indicate that she was not the peasant she pretended to be. Both she and Antonio spoke French fluently, and when Graham expressed surprise at such an accomplishment, she answered shyly that she had been in service in a French family.

There were a few other prisoners with the army, chiefly officers of rank, and their anxiety was painfully visible when, after a couple of days' hurried marching, the French columns came in full view on the opposite side of the river Pisuerga, which the English had crossed on the previous evening.

Presently, across the intervening strip of plain, puffs of white smoke appeared, and hung like soft balls in the damp morning air. Then a stir in the English camp

showed that the iron messengers had done their work, and angry invectives burst forth as the news spread that the shot had fallen into the hospital.

The firing increased, and a small body of men advanced from the French right towards the narrow bridge that spanned the river in the English rear. There the muleteers and camp-followers clustered, and a momentary confusion and panic seized them, during which Paco, who was allowed liberty enough to attend to his animals, rushed away to that side of the camp where the prisoners' tents were pitched.

Madame d'Arblanc, with Antonio beside her, was standing on a slight rising ground, gazing anxiously towards the bridge, while she conversed with one of her countrymen.

She did not see the muleteer, who slipped round the tent, and lifting the flap, looked eagerly at Concha for some seconds without speaking. The poor girl was on her knees beside the heap of dried fern on which the baby was sleeping, and was repeating her prayers, though sobs almost choked the words, and the beads slipped in her trembling fingers.

"Come with me, Concha, my life!" exclaimed Paco, stepping forward and catching her by the arm, "The French will gain the bridge, there is a crowd there, and in the bustle you and I can get away. José, my mule, is swift, and I am a good runner. I will sacrifice the others, I will give up all that I have if you will but come with me, light of my eyes!"

At the first word Concha had sprung up,

and now, shaking off his grasp, she replied sharply,

“You want me to leave Madame and my duty, Paco, and that I will never do. Could I go away from these helpless children?”

“Bah!” replied Paco, “the French will sweep away these beef-eating Englishmen, and then Madame and her brats will find their *beau Lancier*; but you, what have you to do with them? I told you I had a snug home in the hills for you, and a merry life in store, when these cursed soldiers are gone.”

“I cannot do it, Paco. I must stay here, and you must go back to your mules, or you will be missed.”

“You cannot do it! You put me off from day to day, though my heart breaks

for you. You do not care, though I have had no peace since the very first morning you sprang so cleverly on to the back of my mule in the little courtyard of the White House! Then beware, I can hate as well as love, Concha mia—you had best not provoke me too far! Is it, then, some Englishman that you like? If it is, I will kill him, though I die a thousand deaths!"

"Paco! how dare you!" cried Concha, with flashing eyes.

"Ah, I find you out, do I? It is, then, the English officer who talks to Antonio and you! Oh, you do not need a poor muleteer any longer; give me my money, then, and let me go. Tell Madame d'Arblanc I will be paid for all the days I have spent in your service, paid in full—do you hear me?"



Concha had drawn back to the farthest side of the tent, frightened at the man's vehemence, and wringing her hands, replied—

“Madame has no money left, or only enough to get our food. Oh, Paco, you must be patient!”

“And so I will, if only you will listen to me, Concha,” said he, advancing. Happily, Antonio had come unperceived to the tent door, and seeing his nurse's distress, had run off to Madame d'Arblanc, who now entered, bringing the child with her.

“What are you doing here, Paco?” inquired she, angrily. “Off with you this moment, or I will call for help!”

The man hesitated an instant, glaring at the weeping Concha, then dashed out of the tent, leaving the unfortunate women

to comfort each other as best they might.

"No chance for us this time," said Madame d'Arblanc; "the French are driven back, and we march again to-morrow morning."

Again expectation cheered the prisoners when a handful of gallant fellows swam the wintry waters of the Douro, and seized a tower held by a German corps on the English side; but the admiration their exploit aroused was the only reward of their success.

Wellington was strong, and the discomfiture of a German battalion mattered little, save that another hurried march ensued. Then, indeed, when his army crowned the rugged heights of Rueda, and Souham's columns, having glanced at the position, melted away like a dream into

the blue distance, hope vanished also from the prisoners' hearts, and they resigned themselves to waiting for their exchange or liberation.

For some days Graham had been actively and constantly employed, but the first time that he had an hour to spare he strolled over to see how the ladies fared; he never thought of Concha as a servant.

Not far from their tent he found Antonio, bright and merry as usual, but with sundry carefully-darned rents in his clothes that betrayed the scantiness of his wardrobe.

Flinging down the white pebbles with which he was erecting a castle on the edge of a little stream, he ran to meet his friend, and bounded into his arms.

"Well, 'Tonio," said Graham, "how are

mamma and Concha? and what are you doing?"

"I am building a great high castle, and then I'll take stones and fire at it, and knock it down. I'm an English soldier when I knock it down, but Concha says that's wrong, and that I should be a Frenchman then."

"Oh, does she? She likes the French best, then?"

"Yes; but Madame d'Arblanc says the English are good too, and they are fighting for Spain. Mamma said——" The boy stopped, colouring scarlet.

"Well, what did mamma say?" asked Graham, who had been puzzled more than once by the boy's abrupt pauses and obvious confusion.

"Madame d'Arblanc likes the English,

but Concha says I must be a Frenchman."

"But you must do what your mother tells you, 'Tonio."

"So I will," said the boy, looking up at him with a serious face. "Mamma cries very much now, and they say, Madame d'Arblanc and Concha, that they are very unhappy. Concha is always telling her beads, and won't play with me."

"Indeed, I hope nothing has happened to vex them?"

"Oh! no, nothing has happened," replied 'Tonio, sagely. "I don't know why they cry, only there's very little money left in the green bag, and Paco is so tiresome. I hate Paco!" said the child, suddenly sitting up in Graham's arms, and clenching his little fists. "He is a bad man, and I wish you'd send him away!"

“Why, what has he done?”

“He talks so loud, and looks so ugly, and then Madame d’Arblanc is vexed, and Concha cries—oh! she cries! He wants money.”

“Does he? Well, we must see about that. Are you going back to your castle now?”

“No. I will not build any more, because I ought to be a Frenchman, and the English were to take that castle. What shall I do with it?” said the little man, standing with feet planted wide apart, and hands thrust into his pockets, looking down on his heap of white stones.

“Throw them into the water,” said Duncan. “Say they’re those brave French who swam the river the other night.”

“Why do you call them brave? They’re your enemies!”

“Certainly they are brave. Anyone might be proud of what they did there. Besides, ’Tonio, if they were not brave soldiers they would not be worth our fighting,” laughed Graham, as he picked up a pebble and threw it, taking aim at two jagged stones that made an angle below which the water swirled in a tiny brown pool.

“Ah! you hit those stones,” cried ’Tonio. “I’ll try to do that too.”

“All right. Count how many times you can do it before I come back,” replied Graham, and strolled on towards the tent.

An angry voice rose from behind it, and there, his face inflamed with passion, stood Paco, arguing loudly, and enforcing his words with gestures of his long arms.

He was a powerful fellow, short and squarely built, with cunning eyes and full lips. His black hair hung over the collar of his loose brown jacket, a scarlet handkerchief was knotted round his throat, and his legs and feet were cased in breeches, coarse black stockings, and heavy shoes, the sandals of which were "cross-gartered" to the knee. Madame d'Arblanc stood opposite to him, and, with an air of perplexity, was slowly extracting some gold coins from a little green bag she held in her hands. As for pale Concha, she turned at the sound of footsteps, and extended her clasped hands with a gesture of eager welcome.

"Oh! Señor, I am glad that you are come! My lady is in trouble, and this dreadful man will not cease tormenting us.



I wish you would give orders that he should be kept away."

Ere Duncan could reply, Paco had stepped forward, jealousy overmastering him.

"You are glad! You see this Englishman with pleasure, and you forget me, traitress, serpent that you are!"

"Oh! it is a lie indeed, Señor!" cried Concha; but without waiting for her answer, Graham had interposed between the women and the muleteer, with a look on his face that made the latter shrink back.

"What does the fellow want, Madame?" asked he. "If you will allow me, I will arrange for you, and send him about his business."

"Señor, I cannot pay him, or he should have been dismissed sooner. My money is

nearly done, and how can I get more while you block the road to France?" replied the lady, smiling coquettishly, for she had a Spanish woman's admiration for the stalwart figure before her.

"Then permit me to be your banker in this instance, Madame," said he, hastily reflecting that the muleteer's charge could not well exceed his scanty resources. "Tell me what he ought to receive, and he shall trouble you no more."

"Señor, it is not much—a matter of a few dollars only."

"What!" almost screamed Paco, "you dismiss me with that, after all the toil I have gone through!"

"It is the sum agreed on, villain!" said Madame d'Arblanc, rudely, as though she

longed to punish him for the annoyance he had given her.

"And did I agree to spend days in this vile English camp?" began Paco, but Graham cut him short.

"Don't be afraid; we'll add something for extra work, and you'll see the last of the camp to-night."

"Not alone, then—that girl shall come with me. By St. Iago, I'll kill her if she refuses!" cried Paco, beside himself with rage, as he saw Concha's grateful eyes lifted to Graham's face.

Once more he sprang forward, but the latter's hand closed on his collar, and shook him sharply.

"Go, you scoundrel, this instant!" said he, his tone and gesture fully explaining his meaning where his Spanish failed—

“go to my tent over there, bring your mules with you, and when you’ve got your money, march—d’ye hear?”

The muleteer slunk away muttering, as his habit was, but when he had walked a little distance, he turned round. Madame d’Arblanc had gone into the tent, where the baby had begun to cry, and Concha was standing by Graham, the black hood fallen off, and one pretty hand pushing the wavy hair from her forehead. Paco shook his fist with an imprecation, and instead of proceeding to the rear, where the mules were picketed, he dived into the brushwood that grew thickly on the hillside.

“Oh, thank heaven and you, Señor!” sighed Concha; “we shall be happy now that dreadful man has gone.”

"Why didn't Madame appeal to me sooner? It was 'Tonio who told me just now that Paco was making you cry," said the young man, gazing earnestly at the sweet face. "We don't want our prisoners to be more unhappy than we can help."

"Ah, when shall we get away? Can we not go?—what good can it do your Lord Wellington to detain two harmless women?"

"Who knows?" replied Graham, evasively—"perhaps we think harmless women have sharp eyes, and might tell tales. I've seen you using yours, Concha, when that artillery waggon broke down at the ford. But why are you so anxious to go?—there must be some one that interests you in the Lanciers Rouges as well as your mistress."

"There is indeed, Monsieur," said the girl, gravely.

"So much the worse for some of us ; you are far too pretty to be the wife of Spaniard or Frenchman either," answered Graham, meaningly, for he was strongly inclined to make love to this bright-eyed damsel himself.

"If I am pretty, Monsieur, who has been so kind to us, will say nothing, I trust, to make me regret it," replied Concha, with such an air of quiet rebuke that her companion involuntarily lifted his cap.

"Your pardon, Mademoiselle ; it was a foolish speech."

"And as such forgotten," was the smiling reply, while the speaker turned aside to the tent, and Graham walked away, wondering more than ever what romantic

story was hidden in the heart beneath that rough blue bodice.

Evening was approaching, and little 'Tonio's white stones had almost all disappeared. He could hit his mark pretty fairly now, three or four times running, but what a curious sound that was when the pebble struck the rock below the water, a ringing sound, something like the noise he could make with the old tin mug he used for a drum. Suppose there were a tin mug in the water! He had picked some odds and ends already out of the stream at various times—rubbish, indeed, but very precious to him—and the thought made him anxious to secure whatever was hidden below that stone.

Perhaps Mr. Graham would come; but, no, he looked round and saw no signs of

his friend, and if he had gone to speak to Paco, he would not pass that way at all. The water was not deep, but it was cold, he knew it was, for he had been dabbling in it, and his sleeve was wet. He would throw one more stone at the same spot. Yes, there was the sound again. Decidedly he would see what made it.

He took off his boots and socks—very worn ones they were—and laid them on the bank, for Concha had desired him not to get them damp; then, holding up his little trousers, though they scarcely touched his knees, he felt his way cautiously into the stream. A few steps took him to the jagged stones, and peering down, he saw, sticking up between them, the sharp corner of a tin box, bedded in the pebbly bottom.



'Tonio could not get it out easily, but he was unwilling to lose it. Another pull, and another, the little feet were icy cold, the little eyes dazzled with the flowing water, he all but toppled over, and the trousers were hopelessly wet. 'Tonio could have cried, but he was ashamed, so he stifled one sob, and tugged again harder than ever. The box moved, and presently he had it in his arms, and was picking his way out again.

Forgetting boots and socks, away he scampered with his treasure to the tent, at the door of which Madame d'Arblanc was standing, shading her eyes from the low sunbeams, as she looked for the absent boy.

"Here I am," he shouted, "and I've got something so nice for you." The women

exclaimed at the wet and dirty little figure, and in spite of his remonstrances, the precious box was laid aside, while he was dried and dressed. His shoeless condition next caused a severe reproof, and he was desired to show his nurse where the boots had been left.

"But my box, oh, my box! Only open my box, and I will go directly after," cried 'Tonio, struggling to escape from her detaining hands.

"Well, well, I will try," said Madame, taking it up.

It was a small square box, not very strongly made, and its contents jingled when she lifted it. The padlock that fastened it was bent and rusty, and not much effort was needed to break the hasp. The moment it was opened a simultaneous

burst of thankfulness broke from the two women, for it contained gold and silver coins enough to extricate them from all their difficulties. Concha's step was lighter than ever as she went off to find the boots, and only 'Tonio was aggrieved when he found that he had brought home money in lieu of a plaything. His nurse's pleasure satisfied him, however, so that he was quite happy when he returned with the missing articles to the tent, and Concha, in her great contentment, scarcely noticed a faint sound as of a distant shout.\*

When Graham left her, it wanted yet an hour or two of dinner-time, and forgetting all about the expectant 'Tonio, he

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\* It may interest some readers to learn that the main incidents of Concha's flight, including the finding of the treasure, are facts.

wandered down a little ravine, one of many that furrowed the hillside behind the camp. Most of these were densely wooded, tangled fern and bushes growing between dwarf oaks, and these again giving place to tall chestnuts, whose branches were still clothed with drooping amber foliage.

Game was to be found here in abundance as yet, though it would speedily diminish in the neighbourhood of such inveterate sportsmen as the British army produced. Wolves, too, lurked in the cavernous clefts that here and there yawned in the rocks, and many a sentry wished that he dared fire on the long low forms he saw stealthily emerging at night from the thickets.

Graham had not penetrated before to the bottom of this particular ravine, but he suspected that the mouth of it was not

far from the chain of sentries, and wished to see if his surmise was correct. Although he mechanically took the direction he had previously intended, his thoughts were altogether with the girl he had just quitted. What, he asked himself, had tempted him to make such a blundering speech to her—he of all men, who had no right to feel so great an interest in any woman? Who was she? he wondered for the hundredth time—a lady, of that he was certain, and he felt equally sure that she was not in love with that insolent Spaniard. Was it possible that he himself had impressed her favourably? Paco had taunted her with something of the kind.

The idea made his heart beat, but he soon dismissed it, for he could recall no-

thing in her manner to him that indicated such a feeling. How beautiful she was! —he noticed it even when she was setting him aside with that dignified air that made him feel himself a fool. A pretty position it had been for one of the — Guards; it was fortunate no one was there to see it. And yet the girl was quite right; peasant or lady, he had no business to think of her as he had been doing—it was unjust to that poor girl in London. He would see Paco to-night, and settle with him, and then keep out of Concha's way, and not think of her, but of Ellen.

As he came to this wise resolution, he swung himself lightly down a steep rock, and found himself on a narrow strip of flatter ground at the bottom of the ravine. A tiny thread of water trickled beside him,

and there was a sort of track at its edge, rough, indeed, but sufficiently clear for him to see a few yards in front of him and walk without having to push aside branches or clamber over stones. He lounged along slowly, therefore, and taking a couple of letters out of his pocket, tried to read them by the uncertain light, but between him and the pale words arose perpetually a vision of Concha's olive face, on which the rose-flush mantled so delicately, the large soft eyes, the pouting lips, and the quick, variable manner, which was so captivating, and differed so entirely from the restrained nature of an Englishwoman. He did not mean or wish to be changeable, this poor lad, with his impressive nature and artist eye, but he knew in a vague sort of way that change was

delightful to him, and that the last fair face or pleasant sight he saw was to him always the fairest and pleasantest.

It was growing darker, and as he penetrated further, the copse closed in above his head, and more than once a branch crackled sharply without attracting his attention. Even had there been light enough, he would not have finished reading those letters ; one was from Ellen, full of prayers for his return ; the second was from his mother, a homely epistle, in which affection contended with the bitterness that had fallen upon her when she heard she was to have an English daughter-in-law. It was unreasonable, and vexed him, so he folded up the papers impatiently.

One dropped as he did so.

While it was fluttering to the ground,



something crashed through the bushes, a dark figure sprang upon him from behind, and a dagger gleamed in the fading light.

The blow was well aimed, but happily Graham stooped for the letter at the same instant, so that his assailant over-reached himself, and while the gold epaulet turned the blade so that it only inflicted a flesh wound, both men came heavily to the ground.

It was well for Graham that he was quick and active, for he had his work cut out for him. He had fallen undermost, and it was with great difficulty that he so far freed himself as to enable him to grapple with his opponent, whose sinewy hands clutched his throat. For some seconds the struggle was doubtful, as they rolled on the crushed grass, but that dead-

ly grasp never relaxed, and Graham's brain began to swim. The dagger was lying near them, and, with a vengeful exclamation, the ruffian reached one hand for it. Instantly Graham seized the opportunity, and with his whole strength struck him between the eyes, and wrenched himself free. Once on his feet, the other had no chance against his impetuous blows, and ere long he had his foe down on his back, and, with one knee on his chest, stooped to examine his face.

"You scoundrel!" he panted, as he made out the familiar features of Paco. "You shall pay dear for this!"

The muleteer neither stirred nor spoke. He was thoroughly beaten, and relapsed into dogged silence.

Graham was somewhat embarrassed as

to his next proceeding. It was nearly dark, and it would be impossible for him to force the fellow to walk to the nearest guard; moreover, he found that his sleeve was soaked with blood from the cut on his shoulder, which till now he had not felt. After a moment's thought, he took off his crimson sash, and bound Paco's arms tightly to his body, without much resistance on his part; he then, with the dagger, cut off one of the long leather sandals, and began to tie his legs in the same manner. At this the muleteer broke into abject prayers for mercy.

"You will not leave me to the wolves, Señor? For the love of heaven do not go away, the woods are full of them!"

"Eh?" said Graham, pausing, for he had not contemplated this difficulty, and

was uncertain of the amount of risk. "I must leave you till I fetch some one. You don't suppose I'm going to let you off, do you?"

"No, no, Señor, do not leave me! I will walk with you, I swear it, by St. Iago, only do not leave me to be eaten alive."

"Get up and walk on, then; but, look you," said Graham, roughly, holding the dagger up, "if you try to get away from my hold, I'll drive this into you."

Paco obeyed, and the pair proceeded down the glen, stumbling through the darkness. The Spaniard uttered many invocations in his superstitious terror, when the long branches of the underwood stirred, or the wet leaves struck coldly on his face, but Graham paid no heed to them. Watchful and wary, he never let go the sash,

or took his eyes off the square shoulders just in front of him. Paco's cunning eyes glanced round more than once, and once his long arms moved, as though he meditated a sudden effort for freedom, but Graham touched his bare neck with the blade of the dagger and he walked on again quietly.

At last the trees became more sparse, between their black stems could be seen levels of pearly sky, and Graham began to breathe more freely. The guard must be somewhere near, and he shouted loudly, and presently heard a welcome reply.

Five minutes more, and Paco was in the rough grasp of a couple of soldiers, and Graham, who had lost more blood than he was aware of, was sitting down

dizzily by a camp fire, while some one went for a surgeon.

There was short shrift for such sinners as Paco in those days, and a brief inquiry settled his fate. He maintained the same impenetrable silence till the last, only breaking through it when Graham gave his evidence. As the young man concluded, the prisoner, straining against the rope that bound him, lifted a face convulsed with rage, and cursed him with an energy that made even the soldiers recoil.

He died in the grey morning, when the dew was yet heavy on the long grass, and as the rope was adjusted, a bitter cry of "Concha!" escaped his lips.

A few hours later, Graham, with his arm in a sling, set out to inform Madame d'Arblanc of his adventure.

Fate had interfered to assist him in keeping his wise resolutions of the previous evening, for arrangements had been suddenly completed for an immediate exchange of prisoners.

Information had already reached them to this effect, and when he arrived at the tent, he found Madame d'Arblanc gathering together her modest property, and Concha's bright face beaming with happiness.

"Misericordia!" exclaimed the former, when she saw him, "what has occurred? You are wounded—you have been fighting!"

"The wound is nothing—a mere cut that will heal in a day," replied Graham, smiling.

"But how did you get it?" inquired

Madame—"and is it very deep? You look pale; it makes my heart ache to see you."

Graham laughed.

"You waste too much pity on me, Madame. That fellow Paco tried to stab me in the woods last night, but he got the worst of it in the end."

"Santa Maria! What have you done with him? You have not paid him for us, I hope?"

"You will not see him again," replied Duncan, gravely; "he died this morning. We are obliged to take very severe measures in camp, you know," added he, as he saw the startled faces of his companions.

The lady was the first to shake off her gravity, and addressing him again, with



hardly a word of regret for poor Paco, she proceeded to show him the box that 'Tonio had found, and explained that they were to set out in a few hours, under the care of three French officers, who were bound in the same direction.

"But I am almost sorry to go," she continued, volubly; "you English have been so good to us—you are *beaux et braves*, as 'Tonio says. And then to think we should have been the cause of this wound! I grieve for your poor arm," and she laid her hand caressingly on it.

Graham was annoyed; he had never thoroughly liked Madame d'Arblanc, and this morning her flattery seemed more out of place than usual.

Apparently Concha shared his senti-

ments, for she crossed the tent, and speaking from behind him, remarked,

“Tonio is outside, and is calling you, Madame.”

It seemed to Graham that some signal accompanied this speech ; there was certainly a flash in the girl's eyes as he turned quickly round, and Madame d'Arblanc, drawing back with a somewhat confused look, left the tent.

Concha then held out her hand, a thing she had never done before, and addressed him with the air of an equal.

“I am grieved also, Monsieur, that you should have suffered on account of our troubles ; that miserable Paco was a revengeful creature,” she added, with some slight embarrassment.

"He cherished some mistaken ideas, I fancy," replied Graham, "but as far as I am concerned, Mademoiselle, I cannot regret an accident that has happened in your service."

The girl smiled and withdrew her hand again.

"I see you have so far divined my secret that you know I am not a Spanish peasant. I cannot tell you more, but if ever we meet again, you will not see me in this dress. Believe me, however, that, wherever I am, I shall not forget your kindness to poor Concha. And now you must say farewell."

"Must I, indeed? May I not stay and assist you when you start?"

"No, for 'Tonio is already in despair at leaving you, and I should never get him

away from you quietly. I will call him now to say good-bye."

The boy ran in at the summons, and when he saw Graham, hugged him closely, asking, in a breath, why they must go away, and when he would come and see his dear papa.

"'Tonio," said Concha, warningly, "say good-bye to your kind friend, and let him go."

"Good-bye, oh, good-bye!" cried the child. "When I'm a big man, I'll find out where you are, and come and see you."

"I hope you will,'Tonio," said Graham, pleased with the boy's affection. "And I hope you will grow up as big and brave as Con—as your mother wishes. Now good-bye, my little man. Don't cry; soldiers

mustn't do that, you know." And so saying, he kissed him, and put him down.

"You see you have made a fast friend there, Monsieur, and a child's friendship speaks well for him who wins it. Good-bye, I will make your compliments to Madame—indeed I wish you well!"

Again the pretty hand was extended, and Graham, as he took it, looked straight into the kindly dark eyes, and raised it to his lips.

"Good-bye, Mademoiselle, I too shall not forget," he said, and left the tent without looking once behind him.

It is probable that some sharp words ensued between the women, for Madame d'Arblanc had a pink spot on either cheek when she appeared, dressed for her journey, and pretty Concha's face hardly wore its usual

serene expression, as she took a farewell glance in the direction of Duncan's tent, when she rode away.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE ACTRESS AND THE WAR.

NO sooner was the army settled in winter quarters than amusements of every kind succeeded to hard work and privation. The Duke's hounds met twice a week, and if the field was a motley one, the sportsmen were as jovial as though they were out in the shires. Many queer costumes and queerer mounts were to be seen, and many a comic incident enlivened the runs, while no one enjoyed a joke, or laughed at his own mishaps more heartily than the great M. F. H. himself.

Nor was the town behindhand with its festivities. The bright eyes of Ciudad Rodrigo grew brighter than before during that gay winter, and if some of them softened into tears when the air began to breathe of spring, and the soldiers spoke eagerly of renewed action, the time was not far off when more than one dark-haired Spaniard should exchange her warm south for a grey home in England.

Duncan Graham enjoyed this holiday life with the keenness of his years. He never dreamt of breaking his engagement, but whereas it had been once his first thought, it now became a dim background to his daily existence, a thing often only half remembered, at times quite forgotten.

Being a genial-hearted fellow, not troubled with much thought of self, he was



popular with his companions, while with the Spaniards he was an immense favourite, his easy carriage and shapely hands satisfying them that he must have the blue blood that alone could give the *entrée* to their best society.

Invitations poured in upon him, and he accepted them all, and learnt to convey a compliment by his choice of a flower, or read encouragement in the dexterous wave of a fan, as though he had been to the manner born.

Unfortunately, a gay life is also a costly one, and for the first time he was compelled to ask his father for more money, a request the old man granted, with a hint that it must not be too often repeated, for that matters were not going well with him.

The lad paused over the letter; he would not vex his father for worlds, but how could he spend less than he was doing? He could not shut himself up; even now Donna Ysabel was expecting him at the dance, and he must consider the subject later; so he walked off, singing in a rich baritone one of the merry ballads he had learnt, and as he trolled out the praise of

“Un segarro, una caña de Xerez,”

all thought of the advice he had received vanished from his mind. There was no one on the spot to bid him reflect, for his cousin had gone home. Having had the good fortune to distinguish himself, he had obtained his majority, and being wounded, was sent in charge of invalids to England, whither we will now follow him.

Arrived in London, Major Graham established himself in the modest lodgings where his wife was radiantly awaiting him. True, he was hurt, and had to lead a quiet and careful life; but merely to have him in her sight made this foolish little woman look as though heaven itself had opened before her.

Her son Allan, glancing at her now and then, felt himself an intruder on some strange, unearthly rapture, and withdrew as soon as he could after the half-past five dinner, saying that he had an engagement or work to do at his own lodgings. And his mother accepted the excuse, not without some self-reproach, though that was swept away by gladness when she found herself free to sit down by her husband's side, and lay her hand in his caressing clasp.

To Jean Graham her husband had always been a ruler, to be revered and obeyed as well as loved, and to her, therefore, a son had come as a treasure beyond all others—hers with no shadow of unfitness to cloud her possession of it.

The Major's wife, on the other hand, had known a love so perfect that there was no room left for questions of supremacy or obedience. It was sufficient that either expressed a wish for the other to long to grant it. She needed no child to complete her happiness, and though, when the boy came, she loved him dearly, it was for the sake of the father, whose nature she felt assured he would inherit. Unfortunately, at seventeen Allan was unlike that father, and vexed him besides, so that his presence chilled his parents' precious days

together, and in her absorption his mother grudged every moment that was stolen from her husband. She would have reproached herself more had she known to what sinister influence the boy was soon to surrender himself, though had she also foreseen the bereavement in store for her, hardly even then would she have curtailed those hours of perfect peace.

Major Graham at this time expressed his disappointment in his son more freely than of old.

“Invermoy may thank the Lord, Elsie, for as fine a boy as ever drew a sword. As for that pettifogging lad of ours, it seems to me he never leaves his office—much good may it do him !”

Then the pair fell to talking of Duncan, and of the Bartons, to whom Major Gra-

ham, at the request of the former, had conveyed a couple of Spanish mantillas. No intimacy ensued from the visit; the girls were shy, and their father spoke with an evident constraint that nettled the Major extremely.

Subsequently the Rector returned the call alone, and then unbosomed himself to his new acquaintance, without, however, rising in his esteem.

He was a worldly man, but in a quiet, orthodox way, and, therefore, nothing upset him more than to be suspected of worldliness. It is so easy to draw a decent film over one's motives, to appear passive where passivity is, in fact, action, to prove that a step is expedient when, in truth, it is so from one point of view alone. Then to have one's veil torn away, and

one's conduct described in blunt, straightforward language, is disturbing in the extreme, and in this predicament Mr. Barton had found himself soon after Duncan sailed for Spain.

Jean Graham was one of those who are constitutionally incapable of prevarication. What she thought she said, and her whole soul had taken fire at the news of her son's engagement. Her love for him was intense, but not intense enough for complete self-abnegation, and, therefore, it wrought confusion. She believed that he had been entrapped by a designing father, and chained ere he had had time to think ; she did not blame the girl—for what woman could help loving her beautiful boy ?—but she hated Mr. Barton fiercely.

Like most mothers, she could not realise

that her son resembled the rest of his kind, and that she knew little of his innermost heart. There had been no notions of marriage in his head when he left her side, and did they expect her to believe that he had willingly engaged himself to the first lassie he had met? Why, he had never stayed to speak a civil word to Miss Farquharson or Miss Buchanan when they came to see her, girls just of the right sort. And to tell her that he was going to marry an English girl, too! In truth, here was the rub. Jean could not understand a romantic patriotism, but in her own plain way she was more national than Miss Mary herself.

Too uneducated to be cosmopolitan, she cherished a blind dislike to anything foreign, and, as was often the case with



her class, an added spite against everything English. Moreover, she knew her own deficiencies—knew that she could not be altogether like the people round her—and if she felt herself at a disadvantage even with ladies of her own race, how terrible would it be to encounter an Englishwoman, and be expected to receive her as her daughter-in-law! These ideas were never absent from her mind, and she alternately flashed into anger, or shrank with a new timidity that utterly confounded the Laird.

Perhaps she had brooded too much over her son's departure, perhaps the stillness of her level life had told upon her active temperament; whatever the cause, her complaints and accusations were unreasonable. To Duncan himself she wrote but

little, for as she penned her slow letters, the thought that he for whom they were meant might even then be going to his death, restrained her hand. The same reflection, tempered by the aforesaid worldliness, had influenced the Rector also, but between him and Mrs. Graham no such reservations were needful. Jean struck home when she wrote pithily that "no doubt it seemed to Mr. Barton a desirable thing that his daughter should be mistress of Invermoy."

"Did anyone ever see such a production as this," he had said to himself, as he paced angrily up and down his dining-room—"or was a man ever placed in such a position before? Imagine having to answer this," cried he, shaking the obnoxious epistle. "The vulgar honesty of this woman is dis-

gusting—it is worse, it is positively embarrassing!”

This being the Rector’s frame of mind, he stated his grievances strongly to Major Graham, who answered him with civility, and in his heart agreed with Jean.

It appeared that Invermoy himself had made no objection to the engagement, but had declined to commit himself on the subject of settlements till his son’s safe return. In his wrath the Rector began to doubt the advantages of the match, especially as he was ignorant of the nature of Scotch entails, and thus it was that he sought to glean some information from Major Graham.

“Anxious about your daughter’s future,” quoth the latter, drily. “Well, of course, as long as this war continues there are

plenty of chances against her marrying my young cousin. But that's not in your hands."

"Of course not, of course not; and I hope Ellen is prepared to accept any lot with due submission. Still, with a father's feelings—you can understand that I am anxious, very anxious. Mr. Graham should, I think, have been less reserved."

"My good sir, Invermoy does not care to speak of his affairs while the young lady may never be kin of his. If the marriage takes place you needn't fear, she will be well provided for; that's all I can tell you."

"Of course—precisely—I feel sure of it. Still it is a great consolation to have spoken of the matter with one who is so good a friend of our dear Duncan's."

"Canting old hypocrite!" ejaculated the

Major, as soon as he and his wife were alone. "Elsie, we'll keep out of his way. When the girl marries Duncan, time enough then to see if she will be one of us; but I cannot put up with that smooth-faced old gentleman."

"It seems to me you are hard on the poor man. If you were going to settle a daughter in life, wouldn't you try to do your best for her?"

"Certainly. And if the Rector had met me frankly, and asked me if I could tell him anything about Invermoy, I'd have understood him. But I doubt if he ever went straight to a point in his life. We soldiers learn to know men's faces, and I tell you I don't like his eyes, nor his oily way of speaking. You won't go there, wife. We are better alone, are we not?"

How Elspeth answered the question may be guessed. So as her dream was uninterrupted, it mattered little whether the Bartons wondered at or blamed her for not prosecuting her acquaintance with them.

She did indeed suggest to Allan that he might call, but though he replied vaguely that he might do so some day, that time never came.

Apparently he had suited himself with sufficient readiness to the ways of his new life. If a clerk or two had mocked at his Scottish accent or Scottish prudence, he had borne the sneers patiently, till he thought it well to silence them once for all by a slight use of Scottish muscle. His employers, Messrs. Trueman and Rich, approved of him, he learnt his work easily, and had a fair prospect of becoming a

partner in the house, if his father, in the course of a few years, would or could furnish the required capital.

To be in the service of any member of the great East India Company was in those days to be on the high road to fortune, and already in his dreams Allan saw himself offering a fabulous sum to induce some poor Highland laird to part with his ancestral acres.

During the first few months of his stay in town he scarcely went anywhere, save on business, and shunned all places of amusement, partly because he had barely enough funds to keep him till his first quarter's salary became due, partly because his Calvinistic training made him regard the doors of theatres and ball-rooms as the veritable gates of Tophet.

He could not, however, shut his ears entirely to the talk of his companions when they adjourned, like himself, to a tavern for their midday chop and ale, and what he heard prompted him to read some of the verses newly published by the great poet of the day. Much of what he read satisfied and delighted him, and with expanding taste came the desire for some change, some pleasure to vary the dark monotony of his lonely evenings. Still a certain pride restrained him, for he had called the theatre a godless resort, and if any of his acquaintances saw him in one, he would be unmercifully jeered at. He needed some excuse for yielding to his wish, and one speedily offered itself.

Major Graham, though a Presbyterian, had travelled too much to be a very rigid



one, and when his recovery was nearly completed, he proposed that his wife and son should go with him to hear the great Kean, a proposal they gladly accepted.

When they reached the wide entrance of the theatre, a dense stream of people was pouring in, and Brydges Street was blocked with carriages. Struggling slowly through the mass, the Grahams at last made their way into the pit, and had time to look about them before the play began.

Every available place was filled, up to the very footlights, for stalls were as yet unknown. The theatre itself was a fine building, somewhat too brilliant in colour, for while profuse gilding relieved the green of the walls, the box fronts were crimson, each one ornamented with a different device.

Hardly a box was empty, and Allan

looked, with the eyes of one who sees a new world, on the fair faces, short curled hair, and tight white dresses, the deep velvet collars, elaborate frills, and heavy watch-chains of the occupants. His father found some acquaintances near him, for there were numbers of military men in the pit; they were easily distinguishable by their new-fashioned attire, all of them wearing their own hair, and most of them trousers in lieu of knee-breeches.

“Your son?” Allan heard one of them say to Major Graham, “has he joined yet?”

“No, he’s not one of us,” the father answered, curtly, and the supercilious reply, “Not a soldier! Egad, he’s made a mistake then!” irritated the lad, even while it stung him. He turned away and

spoke to his mother while the others chatted on.

"Fine building this; only opened last year, I understand," said the Major.

"Yes, Wyatt has outdone himself, though they say he would never have got the thing finished without the Chairman of the Committee, old Whitbread."

"What, the brewer?"

"Yes, and preacher and manager and who knows how many other things besides. He is an extraordinary person."

"He is wealthy, I suppose?"

"Of course, or he could not have anything to do with a concern like this. He gets on in the world too, I believe, though everyone knows who he is; now in my young days such a man would never have been heard of among us."

"The world is changed since our young days though, and not for the better. We shall have trade treading on our heels soon," said the Major, who was reaching that time of life when the customs of the past seem infinitely better than those of the present.

At that moment four gentlemen lounged into one of the slip boxes, and as they came forward people turned to look, as though at men of note. Celebrities indeed they were, as the Major's friend informed him, and Allan, catching their names, gazed too, eagerly.

The first to enter was dressed in a very bright blue coat, and his sensitive face betrayed rather too great a consciousness that he was looking his best. The "Pleasures of Hope" had been a great success, yet

its author must have felt himself eclipsed by his companions as they stood in the front of the box.

In the centre of the group was a small man, who, without being good-looking, had a very winning and pleasant expression; a contented smile was on his lips, and he listened with keen enjoyment to the witty talk of the pair whose biographies he was one day to write.

These two attracted the most notice. The elder, in spite of his having rather a heavy nose and long face, was still a handsome man, for his colour was warm and his eyes soft and brilliant. He threw himself into a seat, and, with hardly a glance at the house, kept his friends continually amused by his sprightly repartee and conversation.

The last of the party was one whose

lurid genius outshone these lesser stars. His oval face, arched eyebrows, well-cut nostril, and wavy hair were well known to the London world, and now, while he joked with Moore and Sheridan, his frequent smile showed his white teeth and short upper lip to advantage.

During their talk, however, the grey eyes were continually roaming over the theatre, as though to observe how much attention he excited, and his manner was self-conscious and somewhat restless.

Slander as yet had hardly touched him, nor had society pronounced his eccentricities unpardonable, and the name of Byron was a household word with all who pretended to either talent or *bel esprit*.

There were giants in the earth in those days, and within the walls of Drury Lane

alone might be found some who could move men's hearts so that they should wonder at their own emotion. Such a one was he who now stepped upon the stage, one who held, night after night, for a few hours' space, undisputed mastery over his audience. On this occasion he absorbed much of the interest that should have been bestowed on the other players, and the character of Sir Giles Overreach could hardly have been so terrible a reality to Massinger himself as to those who saw it played by Edmund Kean.

The play was a popular one, and the parts were well filled. Wellborn carried himself as though in truth above the rags that clothed him, Marrall's round shoulders and half dropped eyelids suited his cringing nature, and Justice Greedy provoked

the laughter of the gods as he anxiously begged that the cook might obey him in the important matter of preparing the Norfolk dumpling, smacking his lips as he heard the hasty reply,

“ Let it be dumped

Which way thou wilt, or tell him I will scald him  
In his own caldron !”

There was one passage which the actress who played Lady Allworth, gave with an emphasis and sweeping glance that showed how well it expressed the public feeling of the day.

“ If e’er my son

Follow the war, tell him it is a school,  
Where all the principles tending to honour  
Are taught if truly follow’d ; but for such  
As repair thither, as a place in which  
They do presume they may with license practise  
Their lusts and riots, they shall never merit  
The noble name of soldiers. To dare boldly  
In a fair cause, and for their country’s safety,  
To run upon the cannon’s mouth undaunted ;



To obey their leaders, and shun mutinies;  
To bear with patience the winter's cold  
And summer's scorching heat, and not to faint,  
When plenty of provision fails, with hunger,  
Are the essential parts make up a soldier."

A sudden burst of applause followed this "point," for Englishmen were beginning to understand in what fashion their countrymen had proved themselves true soldiers in the sunny Peninsula, and Elsie Graham glanced up at her husband with love and pride in her quivering face. Even Allan was touched, for had there been no personal soreness galling him he could have admired the heroes of Spain openly as he already did in secret. What thrilled him now, however, was less the words than the speaker, for she had entirely absorbed his attention from the moment of her entry. She was handsome enough

to require little "making up," and her mourning costume suited her admirably, setting off her white skin, grey-blue eyes, and warm brown hair. Fine as her face was, it was almost forgotten when she moved, for the singular beauty of her figure and grace of her walk, made mere feature loveliness insignificant.

As the piece proceeded, and the character of Sir Giles unfolded itself in a steady crescendo of villainy, one of the spectators in the stage box became strangely agitated. Leaning over the front, with burning eyes fixed eagerly on the great actor, he appeared to forget entirely that the scene before him was but a fiction. When, at last, Overreach, with madness in his ghastly countenance, hurries from wild threats to shrinking terror, and finally

flings himself with a shriek of rage upon the ground, his cry was echoed by the lips of the rapt listener, who fell back in a convulsive fit into the arms of his friends. A shudder ran through the audience, already strongly moved by the play, and while some whispered that there were evil reasons for Lord Byron's emotion, others hastily left the theatre.

The closing dialogue was hardly listened to, so great was the effect of this slight accident, and that night's performance was long remembered by those who were present.

As Wellborn uttered the concluding speech, Allan gave a sigh, almost a gasp, and slowly recalled his senses, like one awaking out of a dream. His mother, wiping her eyes, began to pour out her

admiration of the leading actor, and a sudden impulse prompted him to restrain himself when on the verge of confessing that to him Lady Allworth was the greater attraction.

Hastily consulting the playbill on the wall, he saw that the name of the actress was Miss Delancey, and as the crowd crept inch by inch out of the pit, he found himself wishing that it were possible to see this queenly creature off the stage. It did not seem to him that he would dare face such talent and beauty, even if he had it in his power, for in his then frame of mind he credited his divinity with all the fine thoughts she had uttered, while the writer who put them into her mouth was forgotten.

Some one close behind him remarked in

a harsh voice, "Fanny looked well to-night, didn't she? That is her best part without a doubt."

"Yes; she plays it with taste. That speech about the soldiers was excellently done. She's a woman of wit, and never misses a point."

Miss Delancey's name was Fanny, then; but who were these dainty beaux who spoke of her so familiarly? Allan glanced round at them with an expression of which he only became conscious when he met their stare of astonishment.

He said but little when he reached home, and his silence was naturally construed into indifference, so that his father cried impatiently,

"Zounds, Allan, I believe nothing save

a ledger can interest you !” To which the lad replied, somewhat sadly,

“ You think, because I cannot talk, that I cannot feel, father ; you would think differently if you knew me better. Good night, mother ; I am sorry I always pain you, but it appears I cannot help it.”

Elsie looked grave when her son left, but her husband consoled her.

“ He will learn to be more communicative by-and-by, do not fret yourself, wife ; a young man is none the worse for a little discipline.”

The sentiment was true enough, but when the discipline takes the form of hasty words from those who should be our dearest, it is apt to corrode the heart that it is meant to train.

From that night Allan Graham was an altered being. Shaken out of his usual calm, and possessed by a single idea, he lost his self-control, and barely succeeded in going through his routine of work satisfactorily. Between him and the page he was adding up came a face; when he was hurrying along the crowded thoroughfare it passed before him; when he lay down to sleep his eyes closed upon a vision of it crowned with brown hair.

No wonder that, after a couple of evenings, he found himself almost mechanically on his way to the theatre. He was fortunate enough to obtain standing-room near his former place, and he imagined that Miss Delancey turned in that direction more than on the previous occasion. It was but a hair's breadth, an instant's

motion, yet her glance seemed to sweep across his face, and thrilled him afresh.

Again he went to see her, starting at the earliest possible moment, in order to be sure of the same position. This time he was certain she distinguished him, and he was right; probably those practised eyes had marked his earnest gaze on the first night he saw her. Once, twice the full orbs looked straight into his own with an electric glance, and when the boy left the theatre every nerve was throbbing with excitement.

One of his fellow-clerks, who had been observing him, overtook him on his way home.

Allan was in no jesting mood, but he checked his rising anger when his companion offered to take him behind the



scenes, and introduce him to Miss Delancey herself.

“Do you know her, then?” he asked, with surprise.

“I have spoken to her. I cannot say I know her well. She has peculiar ideas, not altogether to my liking,” replied the young man, though he knew in his heart that he might aspire in vain to be a guest at Mrs. Jutsom’s supper parties.

Experienced readers do not need to be told that Miss Delancey existed only on the handbills. Fanny Jutsom, *née* Greene, was a remarkable woman, and had Providence placed her a few grades higher in the social scale, she would have made herself famous, even among the fairest and wittiest ladies of the London fashionable world.

Her prudence was as great as her beauty, and if the envious said it was a mere matter of wisdom, there were others who averred that she was setting a bright example to her profession, and that she would live and die an irreproachable woman.

A few nights after Allan's friend had promised him the introduction, the pair made their way through a long saloon gay with pillars of verd-antique and huge gilt corner-stones, to the dark and intricate regions behind the stage.

From illusion to reality, from finely arranged scenes and blazing lamps to rough planks, endless ropes, dingy "shifts," and hurrying "supers," was a change more bewildering to Allan because of its novelty. It did not occur to him that

Lady Allworth and Miss Delancey might be as unlike each other as the right and wrong sides of the canvas by which he was standing, and he did not waver in his desire to see the actress even when a highly rouged figure passed, whom, but for her dress, he would not have known to be Margaret.

He had not long to wait, a low door opened and Lady Allworth came forward, bidding a laughing good night to two gentlemen who had been talking to her.

The blood rushed to Graham's face, and he hardly heard in what terms his friend mentioned him, and half mockingly added that he must leave him at once, but he stammered some ineffectual greeting and touched a firm cool hand that was extended to him.

"I've seen you in the pit ever so often,"

said the rich voice, "you must be a great admirer of the play."

"Yes, that is—it is extremely fine, but it is not the play I come to see, Miss Delancey," blurted out Allan, with a temerity born of shyness.

"No? Well, if you mean that you come to see me, I wish all the audience were as attentive."

"You saw me, then? I thought—I fancied you did."

Miss Delancey smiled, and something like pity came into her eyes.

"Oh! yes, I saw you, and it is ever so much pleasanter to act to anyone who is in earnest, as you are."

"Is it? I am so glad, I have thought of nothing else for days."

"I must go now, though—would you

like to come and see me? Not to-night, I am engaged, but to-morrow I have a supper party after the play, you can come if you like."

"If I like! Where do you live?"

"At 29, Somers Street. Be there by ten o'clock."

In an instant the smiling, easy-mannered woman changed into the stern mistress, rebuking her servants, and passed on to the stage.

Allan did not return to his place in the theatre, and perhaps the actress liked him all the better. She had been struck with his face from the first, and felt a sort of amused interest as she saw how utterly he was wrapped up in her performance. She perceived at a glance that he had never been behind the scenes before, and she

wondered if she had done a foolish thing in asking him to supper. Whether she would have paused had she thoroughly understood the folly of it is a question that cannot be answered—at least, she is entitled to the benefit of the doubt.

Somers Street is narrow and dingy, but those high, dark houses are not uncomfortable abodes, and about the best among them was No. 29.

There were some incongruities and few luxuries in the little sitting-room into which Allan was shown, for Mrs. Jutsom was not quite at the top of her profession, and what she had she spent with a sparing hand.

Over the mantelpiece was a large mirror, the window-curtains were of deep blue, and a settee covered with the same

colour occupied the corner by the fireplace. Blue suited Mrs. Jutsom's complexion, and this furniture was one of her first purchases. On a round table in the window some thumb'd "parts" were half hidden by a handsome copy of Massinger's plays, while on the top of these lay "Childe Harold" and "Evelina" as though more lately used; beside them a bouquet of rare flowers was thrust into a thick tumbler and made the room sweet with its fragrance.

Two finely-painted fans were displayed in lieu of hand-screens on the mantelpiece, but tossed down between them were a cheap pipe, a tobacco-pouch, and flint and steel.

A cold supper was laid on the centre table, and if the ware was plain and common the fare was unexceptionable. Mr.

Jutsom was an epicure when cash was plentiful, and had friends in the best taverns in London, not to mention a certain dark-eyed individual, by name Metasti, who owned what was perhaps the first of the foreign eating-houses that soon grew so numerous in the neighbourhood of Leicester Square.

With the interior of this room Allan Graham soon became far too well acquainted. The society he met there startled and at first shocked him, and he was nearly restored to common sense by the discovery that the Miss Delancey of his dreams was in reality married to a lanky, shambling individual who had dowered her with the vulgar name of Jutsom. Although he did not suspect the fact, he was like wax in the hands of this beautiful, cold-



hearted woman, and she, amused and almost interested by his freshness, knew how to rivet his chains wherever a link showed signs of breaking. He was so unlike anyone else she had encountered, so chivalrous in his manner towards her, so unquestioning in his admiration, that visits allowed at first as a pastime were at last encouraged as a pleasure. He was handsome too, rather more than middle height, and with the same well-set head and wavy hair as his cousin Duncan. The somewhat heavy face of the boy had now assumed juster proportions, his dark eyes were clear and open, with well-defined eyebrows, and his mouth wore a resolute expression in keeping with the full, finely-modelled chin.

Very soon he knew the actress's history

and never admired her more than when, having ended it, she leaned her head on her hand, and with tear-brimming eyes asked for his friendship and sympathy.

He gave her both freely, for he was both too absorbed and too inexperienced to perceive that those wonderful grey eyes were studying him curiously through their tears.

Fanny made a runaway match at seventeen with the elocution master who met her so often on her way to and from the day school where he taught.

She had an actress's instinct, and while these walks were going on, she felt as though she were the heroine of one of the romances she loved.

A very few weeks of married life sufficed to disenchant her. The incessant quota-

tions and theatrical manner that made a charming contrast to the hum-drum ways of the old servant who had been her chief companion, became tiresome to a degree when they formed the staple of conversation.

Her father, a doctor with a small practice, declined at first to acknowledge or assist her, and she was thrown completely on her own resources.

Too young to understand and encourage the real talent her husband possessed, she treated him with impatient dislike, until the careless nature of the man was thoroughly roused, and he burst into a rage that cowed her. His outbreak frightened him himself almost as much, for it was the first time that he had ever spoken harshly to a woman, and thus the storm brought

about a certain amount of mutual forbearance.

Very soon, however, they were in dire need of money, and then Jutsom proposed that his wife should try the stage, and she assented with eagerness. Her beauty obtained her some trifling part, and she studied diligently, reading plays, and listening at rehearsals with far more attention than many who imagined themselves on the road to fame.

She was richly rewarded, for a sudden illness having deprived the manager of one of his leading ladies, Mr. Jutsom informed him, not without many fine words, that his wife already knew the part by heart.

The lion must be served by the mouse sometimes, and the distracted manager smothered his impatience at his visitor's

phrases, and gave an ungracious permission to the lady to come and see him. After a reading he said she might try. After a rehearsal he took a long pinch of snuff, which action betokened a satisfied state of mind. After the performance he informed Mrs. Jutsom that, if she would study a little, he would be happy to secure her services as one of the leading ladies in his next cast.

Fanny went home triumphant, and, with the welcome plaudits ringing in her ears, felt for the first time that she had done well to marry as she did. Once launched, her career was successful, if not brilliant. Some slight defects might be forgiven to so beautiful a woman, and in admiring her face and figure people almost forgot that she never moved them very deeply. Such

a part as Lady Allworth suited her admirably ; she could be dignified, tender, angry, even revengeful, but she never expressed passionate or controlled emotion. Her features were mobile enough, and she studied her part conscientiously, but if she attempted any profoundly emotional scene, her audience could not but feel that here was a woman who, in real life, would lose neither her head nor her heart.

She was nearer feeling love for her art than for any human being ; the variety, colour, and light of the theatre were delightful to her, and the emotion that in itself did not stir her, became interesting as a means of eliciting the applause and admiring gaze that alone could quicken her pulses as she looked at the tiers of faces before her.

Her private life was to her only another sort of play. She liked company, enjoyed amusement, smiled to herself over the by-play, the "business" that she observed going on around her, but she kept her companions at a distance, and when, after a supper-party, her husband would adjourn with some of the guests to play the fashionable game of macao, she bid them good night with the air of a sovereign dismissing courtiers of whom she was weary.

She dressed plainly, wore but few ornaments, and in truth raised in the bosoms of her fellow-actresses an amount of ill-will that was due partly to envy, partly to a sense that they were not as she.

"Wait till she's turned thirty, my dear," said Mrs. Bounce, who, in virtue of her age and experience, took the duenna parts ;

“she'll not be above a little paint and a gold chain or two then ;” which remark might or might not come true, but in the meantime Fanny's face bloomed on serenely with the roses of three-and-twenty summers.

It was August when Graham saw her first, and in October his father sailed again for Spain.

Elsbeth bore the parting with less than her old courage, and when her son went to her—for he had not been allowed to be present at that farewell—he found her leaning back in her chair with closed eyes and death-like countenance.

“Mother, speak to me !” he cried, kneeling down beside her.

She turned her head slowly and looked at him.



“ I shall never see him again,” she said, in an unnaturally monotonous voice. “ I’ve seen him twice with the winding-sheet about him, and a Grant’s second sight has never failed. I thought I would not tell him, but he found it out, and all he said, when he took me in his arms and smiled a mournful smile, was, ‘ Stand fast, Craig Ellachie!’ He will stand fast, my darling, on the day of his doom, and the last sod that’s turned for his grave will be the first cut for mine.”

Horror-struck, Allan knelt on while his mother rose and glided slowly to her room, the door of which she softly closed and locked. When they forced an entrance, she was lying on her bed, staring blankly, and so she remained for some days, while the doctor who was called in

declared that her reason was in danger.

One afternoon, while her son was anxiously regarding her, he saw a moisture come into the dry eyes, and presently she murmured,

“Go and rest, Allan—go and rest. I’ll sleep now, and then rise and wait my time. I have had an awful dream, but it is gone now.”

So saying, she nestled her cheek on the pillow like a tired child, and fell into a profound slumber, from which she awoke refreshed and calm.

Allan had attended her at every spare moment during these terrible days, and when her recovery enabled him to resume his visits to Mrs. Jutsom, he explained the cause of his absence.

Perhaps the romance of the story really

struck her; whether she was touched by it or not, she was astute enough to appear so, and his belief in her sympathy deepened the poor lad's devotion.

At times, when his rapt face shone on her from the pit, or still more when he sat quietly by her fireside, content if he might only see her and be of service to her, the actress began to merge in the woman, and her voice and eyes would soften with something like genuine feeling. People began to say that Miss Delancey was improving, and she herself was fully aware of the change. She dated it from a night when she had played a part quite new to Allan, and that, she knew, would appeal to him strongly.

One glance at the emotion he vainly sought to hide, by shading his face with

his hand, showed her her success, and fired her with a fresh sense of power. For the first time she seemed to realise a character from the inner, not the outer point of view, and the manager, as he complimented her on her performance, thought he had never seen her look so handsome or so proud. It was as though she were entering on a fresh career, more artistic than the last.

Very soon she was not only making money fast, but hoarding it. In spite of her husband's astonishment she kept to a resolution she had made at the outset, that she would if possible lay by enough to keep them in comfort when her powers should begin to wane.

Too wise to risk a dispute by pressing her point too far, she was most careful not

to restrict the dainty fare he loved, nor did she grudge him an occasional rouleau of gold to be spent at the macao-table. Spent, not increased, for Jutsom was seldom a lucky gambler. He had his turns of good fortune, however, in other ways, sometimes giving lessons, now and again taking a chief part at some provincial theatre, where his declamation impressed the rustic mind. His wife resented these expeditions, considering them beneath his dignity as the husband of a leading London actress, but she knew that when he was in a wandering, restless mood it was useless for her to attempt to control him. "After all," as she remarked to Allan, "he keeps himself for a while, and that is a great point, for I find him very expensive."

She always spoke as though he were a necessary part of her establishment, costing her so much a week like the mutton or ale, and perhaps she correctly expressed his position in the little household. Once, indeed, he felt himself entitled to more consideration, and to do Fanny justice she granted it freely, for she felt he had at last done something worth speaking of. He did actually write a farce entitled "A Frenchman in Difficulties," which, being an unscrupulous travesty of the manners of the national foe, was received with favour, and ran a fair number of nights.

Some people said that Jutsom had incorporated in it all the good sayings he had ever heard, but he angrily denied the imputation, and thereafter dated everything

in his life from "the time when I was preparing my play."

The winter stole away rapidly for Allan, who lived in a glowing dream, but very slowly for his mother, who, as the news of each fresh battle arrived, learnt that her husband was safe, yet regarded his safety only in the light of a reprieve.

As the two sat opposite to each other evening after evening, with only the width of the dinner-table between them, they were in reality divided by a world.

Before the eyes of the one floated a vision of life, with ruddy lips and unbound chestnut hair; before the other, expectation could conjure up nothing save the wan face of death. Sometimes each dreamer would look at the other, and wonder secretly, in the intervals of common-place talk, what

the mind might be feeding on, that was at once so near and so far off.

They were not unfriendly to each other, but each was so possessed by one idea that it required a certain effort ere the attention could rouse itself to admit any other. Now and again some chance association would break the spell, and recall earlier days, and then mother and son would draw closer, and indulge in a long talk, in which, however, the former always spoke with a certain gravity, as befitting one whose time for speech was short.

Duncan Graham had his full share, meanwhile, of the campaign of 1813, and Major Graham joined his regiment before the Nivelle was fought.

Victors in five pitched battles, the British soldiers had well earned their



winter repose. They made the most of it, as they had done before, and when the turf in England was beginning to whiten with snowdrops, they entered on their last campaign in the south.

It was on the 10th of April that they won their final laurels, and abler pens than mine have told how much their leader dared, and how he was obeyed; how also the foe failed to seize the desperate moment when two divisions were all but in his power.

We are only concerned with the operations on two sides of the town of Toulouse.

Standing on a tiny peninsula, between the Garonne and a winding canal, and covered on one side by rocky heights, above whose crest the lines of fortification stood out squarely against the sky, it seemed

well nigh impossible to dislodge the army that held it.

At one and another point, however, the attack was made; here impetuous Picton turned feint into earnest, and failed accordingly—the only general who, so disobeying orders, did not seem to suffer at Wellington's hands; there Hill was slowly but surely gaining ground among the crowded white houses that form the suburb of St. Cyprian.

And those crowned heights, where the wide mouths of the guns are yet silent, and fourteen thousand men stand confidently behind the breastworks, is it possible that the English think to capture these? It looks as though they meant to try, for a large body of troops is gathering on the far side of the little river Ers.

The darker half of the mass holds on its way towards yonder village of Croix d'Ortade—Spaniards these, not to be very greatly considered, the Frenchmen think, but the lesser half, the red jackets and bear-skins, too, are across the river, stealing away to their left. They are mad, these islanders, they have but a single gun, and ours can sweep every inch of the ground; moreover, the land is dead level between the Ers and the canal, and stiff walking, even if one had nothing to think of but one's feet—decidedly they are lost men as well as madmen.

But there is a Berserk madness that is apt to attain its end in spite of whizzing shot and deepening swamp, and Beresford's division must have been possessed by it that day. As he pressed on with steady

determination, the head of his column began to creep in too close for the range of the guns—soon the main body was safe also, and there was a halt to form up and make ready for a rush with the bayonet. Those on the very brow of the heights could not well see what was going on at the lowest redoubt, but they were not left to speculate long. Instead of a scarlet wave thrown back, as they expected on the plain, there was musketry smoke, a distant sound of that barbarous Hurrah that was pretty well known by this time, and then—why, here are Frenchmen crowding up in disorder, and the English have won the lowest redoubt.

It is scandalous, unbearable, thinks a young French officer with shining eyes and wonderful curling fair hair. A mere

lad he is, but one that veterans might follow, as he stands gripping his sword and watching keenly for the expected foe.

There they come, the bearskins are appearing over the rocky ledges, and it is our turn to show how they should be met. "Vive l'Empereur et la gloire, mes enfants!" shouts the lad, and a hoarse assenting murmur sounds behind him.

A couple of furious minutes and the red jackets are gaining—in vain the young lieutenant encourages, orders, implores his men to rally, those inexorable bearskins are almost in possession, the Frenchmen fall back, begin to fly—there is no hope. "Poltrons!" cries the lad, grinding his teeth—he looks round, sees that he is almost alone, sees in that instant a dark-haired English officer calling to him to

surrender. "Vive l'Empereur!" he shouts in a clear voice that rings through the noise, and, springing from the parapet, flings himself down upon the advancing bayonets at Duncan Graham's side. More than one eye glanced pityingly at the gallant young face, but there was no time for pause or tendance, the Guards swept on, and soon Beresford stood where Wellington had said he expected to see him, on the top of the formidable heights.

Meanwhile the Spaniards were progressing fairly. Don Manuel Freyre had complained that he was never permitted to take the lead, that, greedy of fame for his own nation, Lord Wellington invariably gave the post of danger to the British, and he demanded for the honour of Spain his share of peril. To such a request a

soldier could make but one reply, and Lord Wellington intimated to the Spanish leader that it should be his task to carry the left of Soult's position on the heights when Marshal Beresford's attack should have developed itself on the right. Don Manuel's pride was satisfied, and he and most of his officers did their best to merit the trust reposed in them.

He marched steadily up the Ers, and began to breast the lower and unfortified portion of the hill.

The enemy's guns kept up a hot fire, and his division suffered, as was to be expected; still it did not seem to ordinary observers to waver. Some way up the slope was a narrow passage between rocks, partially covered in, and completely sheltered from the artillery; into this the head of

the Spanish column plunged, but it did not re-appear at the other end.

Happily its progress was carefully watched by the quick eye that could see the remedy almost as soon as it detected a blunder. Up, at the double, to the foot of the slope came part of a division, including the —— Highlanders, and forward at a gallop went a battery over seemingly impossible ground to command the upper opening of the passage.

"Did you ever see ten thousand men run away?" asked Lord Wellington calmly of one of his staff.

"No, indeed!" was the astonished reply.

"Wait a minute and you will see it now."

True enough, the French saw their advantage and pressed down to attack the



now disorganised mob of Spaniards, which speedily lost all semblance of discipline, began to sprinkle at the edges on to the slope, and finally poured, like an unloosed torrent, back upon the way it had come. Only the Tiradores de Cantabria held their ground until ordered to retire.

But the guns are nearing to defend them when down goes the foremost driver. His horse shies, stops, the check at such headlong speed causes a momentary confusion, and the French are closing in. With a bound a young officer, by name Michell, springs on to the horse, his cap falls off, showing a singularly handsome face, bright with excitement, and the men follow him with redoubled spirit as he gathers up the bridle, and, urging with hand and voice, dashes onward with the guns.

At the same time the English infantry at the foot of the hill take open order, and through their steady ranks hurries the rout of Spaniards; then, with contempt on their stern faces, the men close up again, and ascend the hill as though they were marching to parade. On and up sweeps the disciplined array; the French, whose ranks are ploughed by shot, yield in their turn, and the ground is won.

Not without loss, however; there are terrible gaps where the Highland bonnets make a plummy darkness in the red line; there are some straggling bushes among the stones, and as the men draw near them a bullet strikes Major Graham and he flings up his arms and falls dead. The old sergeant near him sets his teeth hard,—he does not stop, for he knows well the

look of a death wound, but as he thinks of the years during which his officer has led and befriended him, his brow lowers with an expression that bodes ill for the Frenchmen who may meet him that day.

Under those bushes crouches a Spanish captain, and one or two of the Englishmen pause to try to rouse him. He hardly lifts a countenance bleached with fear, and when a young lieutenant inquires angrily why he and his men could not go on, he murmurs hoarsely, "Christ himself could not have stood on that hill," and skulks again, a miserable object.

The sergeant swears at him, for he grudges life to this useless coward, when death has just stilled so gallant a heart a few yards away; but words will

not give him courage now, and he is left under his shelter.

When the Highlanders came to bury their dead that night, old Sergeant Morrison was almost glad to find the Spaniard a stiffened corpse.

In the afternoon, when success is all but assured to the British, their auxiliaries rally and share again in the battle, but not without care being taken that they shall be well supported.

“If it hadn’t been for our division those fellows wouldn’t have stopped till they reached the river,” said some one that evening to Lord Wellington, when the day’s operations were being discussed over a hastily prepared meal.

“The river!” ejaculated Wellington, “they would never have stopped till they

got to Spain!" and it was well for Don Manuel Freyre that he did not hear the tone in which the great leader spoke of his force.

In the dim night, when our wearied soldiers were at rest, fresh exertion was demanded from the French troops. Silently, with muffled tread and watchful care, they mustered in the city, and by the gate farthest from the main body of the English, slipped away, a shadowy mute mass, in the darkness.

As soon as he was able, Duncan Graham returned to the captured redoubt, in order to search for the young French officer, whose beautiful face had struck him as much as the desperate manner of his death.

He easily discovered the corpse, jealous-

ly watched by a wounded soldier, who supported himself on his elbow and looked suspiciously at Duncan from under shaggy grey eyebrows.

One of the dead officer's hands still grasped the broken sword, the other had torn open the breast of the uniform as though to feel at the last moment for a long gold chain and cross, just visible round the neck.

Graham glanced down, and uttering an exclamation involuntarily took off his cap.

The old soldier nodded his approval and spoke huskily.

“Oui, vous voyez, monsieur,—c'était mon lieutenant, et si bon enfant! Toujours prêt à travailler comme nous autres, et maintenant, de voir que c'est une femme, ça fait pleurer, foi de soldat! Vous la

ferez enterrer, monsieur, n'est-ce-pas?"

Duncan gave the required promise earnestly, and asked if he could do nothing for the poor fellow himself, but he declined all help, saying he was near death; perhaps if monsieur would let him be put into the same grave with *her*, it would not be much trouble,—and a little water—if he had any? Graham gave him brandy and water out of a flask he had brought, and then went for assistance; when he returned the old soldier was dead, with one arm laid across the body he was so anxious to guard. They were buried together, and as Duncan stood by, he wondered greatly what sore trial could have driven this lovely girl to court so strange and terrible an end.

When morning broke and the citizens

first afoot saw the sunlight flash on empty guard-houses and deserted guns, they could hardly believe their good fortune.

Hurrying to Mayor and Préfet, rousing their friends in house after house, the population was soon astir.

The English saw with delight the open gates and impromptu white flags, and by-and-by, with joyful clamour of bells and music, they entered the town, not as conquerors only, but as friends.

Next day came hurrying messengers with the news of the Emperor's abdication, and nothing marred the rejoicings save keen regret that the news had arrived too late to prevent the needless sacrifice of many brave lives.

To Duncan Graham this thought came with exceeding bitterness as he followed



his cousin's body to its last resting-place. On the eve of a previous engagement Major Graham had told him of his wife's rooted belief that he would be killed, and confessing that he shared it, had entrusted him with his last directions and messages.

"Tell Elsie," he had said, "that I bid her remember her motto and 'Stand fast.' As I believe that there is a Heaven, I believe that I shall meet her hereafter there."

And now Duncan had to deliver this message, and he assented sorrowfully when Sergeant Morrison, brushing his hand across his eyes, exclaimed,

"To gang through sae many fights, and to fa' at the last and leave his banes far frae his ain folk, gars even an auld man like me greet. The hail regiment will

miss him when we march into Auld Reekie aince mair."

The news reached Elsie speedily.

Allan was on his way home from the office, when he came upon a crowd assembled to gather what information it could from the shouting news-boys, who with broadsheets under their arms were issuing from the printing-houses, and proclaiming,

"Another great Victory!" "Gazette with killed and wounded!"

Often news of a battle arrived days before the gazette, but peace had accelerated the transit, and Allan buying a *London Chronicle*, hastened to look at it by the bright light of one of the new gas-lamps that were then beginning to supersede the flaring oil.

For an instant he turned sick and giddy, as his eye fell on the familiar name in the fatal list, and he felt as though it would be impossible for him to tell his mother.

As he walked slowly on he revolved the matter in his mind ; there must be letters soon, Duncan would be sure to write, unless—he stopped, and looked again at the paper. Ah, he at least was safe, and mentioned with distinction as one of those who led the attack on the heights. Well, he would write ; would it not be best to conceal the broadsheet and wait till the post arrived—the runners seldom passed down their quiet street, and his mother would not hear of the battle. He forgot that love is not easily deceived. Elspeth had been strangely restless and uneasy for the last few days, and to-night she was at

the window, watching for her son's return.

The moment she saw him coming with bowed head and slackening steps along the narrow footway, she knew what had happened, or, if she had any hope left, it fled when Allan opened the door and stood before her with colourless face.

"He's dead," she said, quietly, looking at him, and he could find no voice with which to reply. "I knew it. I saw him a week ago, lying on his face on a bare, burning hill-side, with the white smoke heavy about him. I'll not be long alone, not long—not long," she murmured, and, as before, shut herself into her room, leaving Allan more alarmed at her stillness than at any outburst of grief.

When Duncan's sad letter reached her she wept passionately, and her son almost

feared to leave her alone during the whole weary day.

Returning one evening early, he found her clad in her widow's weeds and apparently more restless than she had been since her bereavement.

"Allan!" she exclaimed, as he sat down beside her, "I must go home—home to my own folk and my own country. I cannot bear these close streets and these dull walls. I cannot rest in the house, and I can find no comfort out of doors. I have walked for hours to-day, seeking peace, and finding none, and my heart is sick with longing for the bonny fir-woods on Speyside. I would fain have stayed here where he has been with me, but I couldn't die quietly in this dreary town, and so I'll go home, Allan."

"Well, mother, if you will be less unhappy there it must be so. I will try to find some one who will take care of you on the journey, for it would be impossible for me to get away. It is a terrible distance for you to go."

"I've gone farther and never thought the road long when your father was beside me, and the pipes playing in the distance. The way's never weary when the heart's light that treads it. You're young, and I am a cheerless companion for you, my boy, you can spare me, and my kin will give me a resting-place till the end comes for which I pray," replied Elspeth, raising her wistful eyes to the strip of grey sky that was visible above the narrow street.

Her determination never wavered for a moment, and her son with difficulty per-

suaded her to wait yet a few weeks in London, as there was every prospect of Duncan's return, and in that case he would be her fitting escort as far, at least, as Invermoy.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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